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An Importance-Performance Analysis of Local and Destination Visitors to Monocacy National Battlefield

Proposal for a Poster Presentation

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand the evolving visitor experience at Monocacy National Battlefield (MONO) in Fredrick, Maryland and, specifically, the way this National Park Service site serves both its' destination and local visitors. Using an Importance-Performance Analysis, segmented by visitors' county of residence, we demonstrate key differences in the visitor experience across visitor type. MONO has two main demographics who utilize its 1,647 acres: individuals seeking to learn about historical importance of the site in the Civil War and local recreational visitors from Frederick and surrounding communities. Due to MONO's proximity to the more densely populated area of Fredrick and Civil War roots, it appeals to both of these populations, who find vastly different uses in the park. This dual usage of space becomes an issue when the limited funding for parks is taken into consideration, requiring an understanding of desired experiences, amenities, and services that might appeal to both visitor demographics. Accordingly, we were asked to assist the Park, in better understanding the similarities or differences between visitors desired amenities, opportunities, and experiences at the Park to guide future investment, planning and management.

To gauge visitors' perceived importance and performance across different amenities, services, and opportunities, an Importance-Performance questionnaire was developed. An Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) "provides businesses and organizations with a fairly clear assessment of where they are performing well and where improvements are required" (Draper, 2016; Martilla & James, 1977). Following survey design with MONO managers and approval from the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, onsite sampling occurred over 14 days, stratified by day of the week and time of day, in summer and fall of 2021. 469 visitors were contacted across five high-use sites of interest identified by the park (Best Farm, Gambrill Mill, Thomas House, Worthington House, and the MONO Visitors Center). 445 visitors agreed to participate in an online survey, yielding an acceptance rate of 94.9 percent. Surveys were conducted online and completed by visitors following their visit. 287 visitors completed more than 50 percent of the survey yielding a 61.2 percent response rate.

Emerging results suggest key differences in the visitor experience across visitor type, as well as potential areas importance shared by diverse visitors to MONO. Final analyses will be completed by January 2021, and will highlight opportunities for the park to use data-driven decision making to plan and manage across visitor type. Furthermore, we expect that our results will add to the evolving understanding of how recent recreational trends impact park and historic area management.

NERR Abstract – (500 words max. plus references)

References

Draper, J. (2016). Applying importance-performance analysis to services of a visitor information center. *Tourism and Hospitality Research, 18*(1), 84–95. doi: 10.1177/1467358415627300

Martilla, J., & James, J. (1977). Importance-Performance Analysis. *Journal of Marketing, 41*(1), 77-79. doi:10.2307/1250495