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Ecology, People
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Visitor satisfaction at a Conservation Category remnant wetland on the Swan Coastal Plain

This research project focused on surveying visitors about the importance of facility provision and the management of urban public open space (POS) using the Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) tool¹. IPA can be used to survey the experiences and perceptions of POS users and can identify opportunities for management and resourcing improvement(s). IPA surveys can thus reveal valuable information in regard to:

1. Decision making based on the activities, perceptions and satisfaction of POS users;
2. Providing evidence based reasons (in respect of community support for both management actions and expenditure) for prioritising the installation, upgrading and/or removal of infrastructure and/or services;
3. Enhancing the environmental, recreation, and educational outcomes of POS; and
4. Strengthening relationships and trust between POS users and the relevant land manager(s).

Methods and results

The Lake Claremont study site is a Conservation Category wetland located approximately 10 km southwest of the CBD of Perth, Western Australia². During surveying events between December 2016 and February 2017, 423 visitors to Lake Claremont volunteered to complete a pen and paper satisfaction questionnaire.

Visitors indicated their satisfaction with the Lake Claremont POS by using 5-point Likert scales to rate the Importance (Not at All Important to Extremely Important) and Performance (Not at All Satisfied to Extremely Satisfied) of 22 key features that published articles report on as indicators of high quality POS³ (Table 1).

Plotting the mean Performance and Importance values for each feature against each other on a scale-centred IPA (Figure 1) provided an indication of the quality of the Lake Claremont POS. Re-plotting these values on a data-centred IPA (Figure 2) facilitated finer scale interpretation regarding public perceptions about the

TABLE 1 Validity of quality public open space features for Lake Claremont POS and prioritisation for management action/investigation ordered by satisfaction gap (Avg. Performance – Avg. Importance). Feature numbers relate to the labels of data points shown in Figures 2.

Features with a significant correlation between Importance and Performance ordered by priority for management investigation/action (Valid IPA).		
High: Importance exceeds Performance	Medium: Performance exceeds Importance	Low: Performance matches Importance
4. High quality lake water body (-0.72)	21. Par 3 Golf Course (0.48)	11. High quality services – café/gym/golf (0.02)
3. High quality nature spaces and areas (-0.51)	20. High quality turf (0.37)	8. On-leash dog walking (-0.10)
1. Tree management (-0.48)	17. Bird-watching deck/rotunda (0.32)	7. Ease of access to and around the site (-0.06)
2. Native fauna presence and activity (-0.51)	18. Fencing (0.28)	14. Interpretive information and signs (-0.02)
	15. Aquatic Centre/Cresswell Oval/Tennis Club (0.27)	
	16. Park exercise equipment (0.17)	
	13. Children's playground(s) (0.15)	
Further investigation required before management action taken as inconclusive relationship between Importance and Performance (Unreliable IPA)		
Importance may exceed Performance	Performance may exceed Importance	Performance may match Importance
12. Off-leash dog exercise (-0.56)	5. Personal safety (0.36)	
10. Dog exercise area (-0.51)	19. Directional signs within the park (0.25)	
9. High quality POS infrastructure (-0.24)		
6. Shade availability – trees/structures (-0.23)		



FIGURE 1 Scale-centred Importance-Performance Analysis. Feature marked * considered unreliable and eliminated from fine scale IPA. Dashed line shows optimal performance where Importance matches Performance

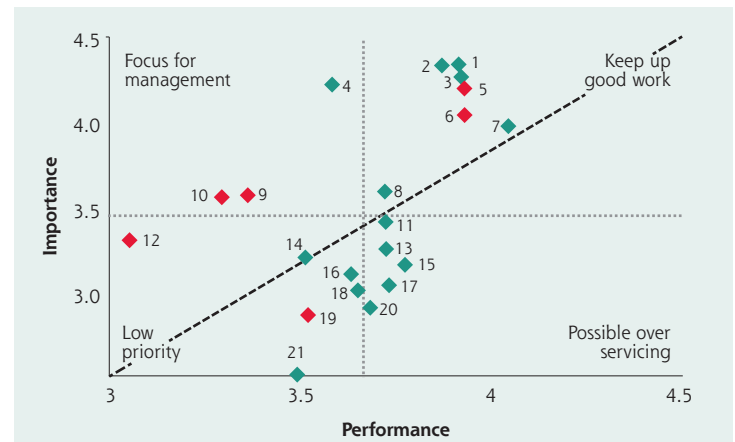


FIGURE 2 Fine scale data-centred Importance-Performance Analysis. Valid IPA features (Table 1) are GREEN and unreliable IPA features RED. The further a feature is from the dashed line the greater the gap between visitors rating of Importance and Performance for that feature

performance of the Lake Claremont POS and to set management priorities.

Consistent with other studies of city liveability and quality urban POS³, 28% of surveyed POS users were visiting Lake Claremont for the purposes of exercise. 14% of users come to Lake Claremont to relax in the outdoors. Connecting with nature was also a drawcard, with viewing flora and fauna accounting for 18% of visitor activity. Exercising dogs on and off lead is also a major visitor activity (22%) at Lake Claremont.

Mean values of Importance range from 2.69 to 4.39 and mean values of Performance range from 3.05 to 4.05 (suggesting visitor satisfaction levels of between 61% and 81% for the 22 features assessed). This places all features but one* in the top quadrant (Keep Up Good Work) for the scale-centre IPA (Figure 1), which is evidence that visitors rate Lake Claremont as a high quality urban POS.

While visitors are highly satisfied with the quality of the Lake Claremont POS, Figure 2 and Table 1 provide a more detailed analysis of the 22 features to inform focus and priorities for management review and or intervention. This is based on their distance from the optimal performance line (dashed line shown in Figures 1 and 2).

Conclusions and recommendations

This project was undertaken to gather information about visitor experiences and satisfaction with various established public open space features when visiting the nature space at Lake Claremont.

With limited opportunities to purchase or create new urban nature spaces, the efficient management and continuous improvement of existing public open space is critical³. This research provides land owners/managers and the general community with information to increase the efficiency of management, help inform levels of service and to focus future management decisions. For example, the results of the survey indicate that a high-quality lake water body is important, but the current condition of the lake is below expectation. As a result, that feature required a greater management focus.

The survey also indicates that on-lead dog walking is an important feature of the Lake Claremont nature space and that park users' think this activity is well managed (Keep Up the Good Work). In contrast, the management of both off-lead dogs and the designated dog exercise area are below park users' expectations, but the reasons for this dissatisfaction are not clear from the survey and additional discussion with the community is needed before management action is decided and implemented.

This project can thus act as a guide for the community and land owners/managers of other urban nature spaces to gather similar information about their sites and to improve the opportunities and quality of these spaces with careful allocation of scarce of resources. ■

More information

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References

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2. Simpson, G., & Newsome, D. (2017). Environmental history of an urban wetland: from degraded colonial resource to nature conservation area. *Geo: Geography and Environment*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/geo2.30>
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*The item of High Quality English/European Style Gardens yielded the lowest number of participant responses and the most need for clarification by survey participants. For these reasons, the Importance and Performance ratings for this POS feature are likely to be unreliable and it is not included in the data-centred IPA.



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