



Indian Bluff Golf Course Survey Report

Chloe Gale, Graduate Assistant-Museum Studies

Dr. Donald McLean, Faculty-Recreation, Park & Tourism Administration

Western Illinois University - Quad Cities

September 17, 2018

Executive Summary

The Indian Bluff Golf Course, a unit of the Rock Island Forest Preserve District, was the focus of this evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation was to provide data that could potentially improve the overall experience for golfers by utilizing satisfaction and importance ratings to assess various aspects of the golf experience. The method for data collection was a self-administered survey distributed on site to golfers who entered the clubhouse after their rounds of golf. Three major conclusions were drawn: 1) golfers at Indian Bluff are generally satisfied with their overall experience; 2) the average Indian Bluff golfer is an older male who has been playing for a number of years; 3) Indian Bluff heavily relies on the recommendations from their current populace to gain new golfers. The survey data suggests managerial attention and action be considered for the following areas: 1) allocating more resources to items that fall below average on satisfaction and importance; 2) opening up the snack shack; 3) gain a greater social media presence to increase and diversify Indian Bluff's customer base.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction to the Project	4
2. Methodology.....	4
3. Findings.....	5
4. Conclusion and Recommendations.....	12
5. Appendix.....	14

Introduction to the Project

The purpose of this evaluation project was to determine the aspects of the Indian Bluff golf experience that could be improved upon according to visitor input. The Rock Island Forest Preserve District hired a graduate assistant from Western Illinois University-Quad Cities to create a satisfaction/importance survey that golfers would have the option to complete after their round of golf. The survey asked golfers to rate a variety of items related to their golfing experiences at Indian Bluff according to how important they judged the items to be, and also their level of satisfaction. The items in question include location, value for money, customer service, course condition, and clubhouse amenities. The survey also covered a number of demographic and behavioral questions to gain a better understanding of the population that Indian Bluff is serving. Data collection began in April was completed by mid-July.

Methodology

The survey design was based on a quantitative summative exit questionnaire distributed and collected by the graduate assistant Chloe Gale for the Rock Island County Forest Preserve District. The survey included six sections with forty-one questions relating to the golf experience and three demographic questions to gather data about the general characteristics of the golfers playing at Indian Bluff. The design method used random sampling, selecting every third golfer entering the clubhouse and intercepting those using the shelter area. Cluster sampling was also used to vary the data collection times according to both the days of the week and also morning, afternoon and evening times to ensure a representative sample. If a visitor was unable to complete the survey at Indian Bluff for any reason, they had the option to take home a mail-back survey to complete. The constructs that were measured were the satisfaction and importance that players associated with a variety of items relating to the golf experience. The survey distributed utilized a rating scale (1- very unsatisfied/ unimportant, to 5- very satisfied/ important) with the option of N/A if the subject did not pertain to their experience, broken down into five categories which included: Location, Value for Money, Service, Course, and Clubhouse Amenities.

Limitations

Initially, it was proposed that the survey would be distributed at the golf cart return building. After pilot testing, it was quickly discovered that the rate of participation consent was much greater for the individuals who were entering the club house. Thus, the method of distribution was revised to focus only on distributing the survey to individuals entering the club house. A major limitation encountered during the data collection phase of this project was number of repeat golfers. While repeat visitation is a positive sign for Indian Bluff, the large number of repeat golfers made it more

challenging to get a high response rate due to the fact that once someone had filled out a survey they were not eligible to fill it out again.

Findings

A total of 155 surveys were collected, resulting in an estimated sampling error of +/- 7.7% at a confidence level of 95%. The data was entered and analyzed using SPSS statistical package software to produce descriptive statistics. The sample included regular players, league players, and tournament players at Indian Bluff. The resulting descriptive statistics fall into two basic categories: 1) satisfaction/importance scores relating to the golf experience at Indian Bluff; 2) information relating to the golfers themselves, such as their age, golfing ability and how they learned of Indian Bluff.

Some qualitative data was also collected as the questionnaire had a section for further comments. This data was analyzed via a constant comparison method to determine themes expressed by the golfers' comments.

1) Golf Experience Data: Satisfaction and Importance

Figure 1 is a visual representation of the satisfaction and importance section of the survey overall. The x axis represents golfers' satisfaction with various aspects of their golfing experience at Indian Bluff and the y axis represents importance they attached to those same items. By plotting the mean scores for each item that the golfers were asked about results in a visual representation called a scatter plot showing the relative importance and satisfaction for each item. Calculating the median aggregate scores for satisfaction and importance creates the "crosshairs" on Figure 1 that allows for the data to be classified into four quadrants for potential managerial actions. The top left quadrant labelled "Concentrate on improvement" indicates that Indian Bluff should consider allocating more resources to these items, as golfers rate these items of higher importance, but are relatively unsatisfied. The top right quadrant labeled "Keep up the good work" indicates that Indian Bluff should maintain its current delivery practices for these items as both importance and satisfaction are rated high. The bottom left quadrant labeled "Lowest priority" indicates that these items are not in need of significant managerial action, as while golfers are relatively unsatisfied with these items, they also attach less importance to them. Finally, the bottom right quadrant labeled "Over-kill" indicates that some of the resources for these items could potentially be shifted to higher priority items since golfers, though very satisfied with these items, also rate them as relatively unimportant.

When interpreting the survey results it is reasonable to expect that the feedback from the golfers would be generally positive due to the fact that they have freely chosen to come to Indian Bluff over the other courses in the area. In other words, highly dissatisfied players were or are not likely to be included in the sample as they probably would choose to play at other courses. That said, based on the scatterplot, we can see

that the overall distribution of the data points indicates that management resources are typically being appropriately allocated as most of the data points are in the “Keep up the good work” and “Lowest priority” quadrants. We can also see that the median for satisfaction and importance is approximately 4.25. Based on a 5-point scale, this is indication of a high overall satisfaction of their golf experience.

Location

The items in the Location section of the survey included the number of parking spaces, the accessibility to the course, and the main entrance sign location. As can be seen from Figure 1, these items’ average scores placed them in the general lower right quadrant. Indian Bluff can rest on the fact that they scored above average for Parking and Accessibility. While the main entrance sign location did score below average on satisfaction, it also scored below average on importance, meaning it will not affect the visitors overall experience.

Value for Money

The items in the Value for Money section included greens fees, cart fees, season passes, twilight golf, pro shop prices, and club rentals. Of these items six, pro shop prices, club rentals, season passes, and twilight golf all scored significantly lower than average on both importance and satisfaction, placing them in the “lowest priority” quadrant of Figure 1. Cart fees and greens fees scored relatively average on both satisfaction and importance meaning that your golfers are pleased with these items.

Customer Service

The items in the customer service section of the survey include attentiveness of staff, friendliness of staff, helpfulness of staff, and professionalism of staff. As seen in Figure 1, all four of these items scored extremely high in both satisfaction and importance, placing them in the “keep up the good work” quadrant.

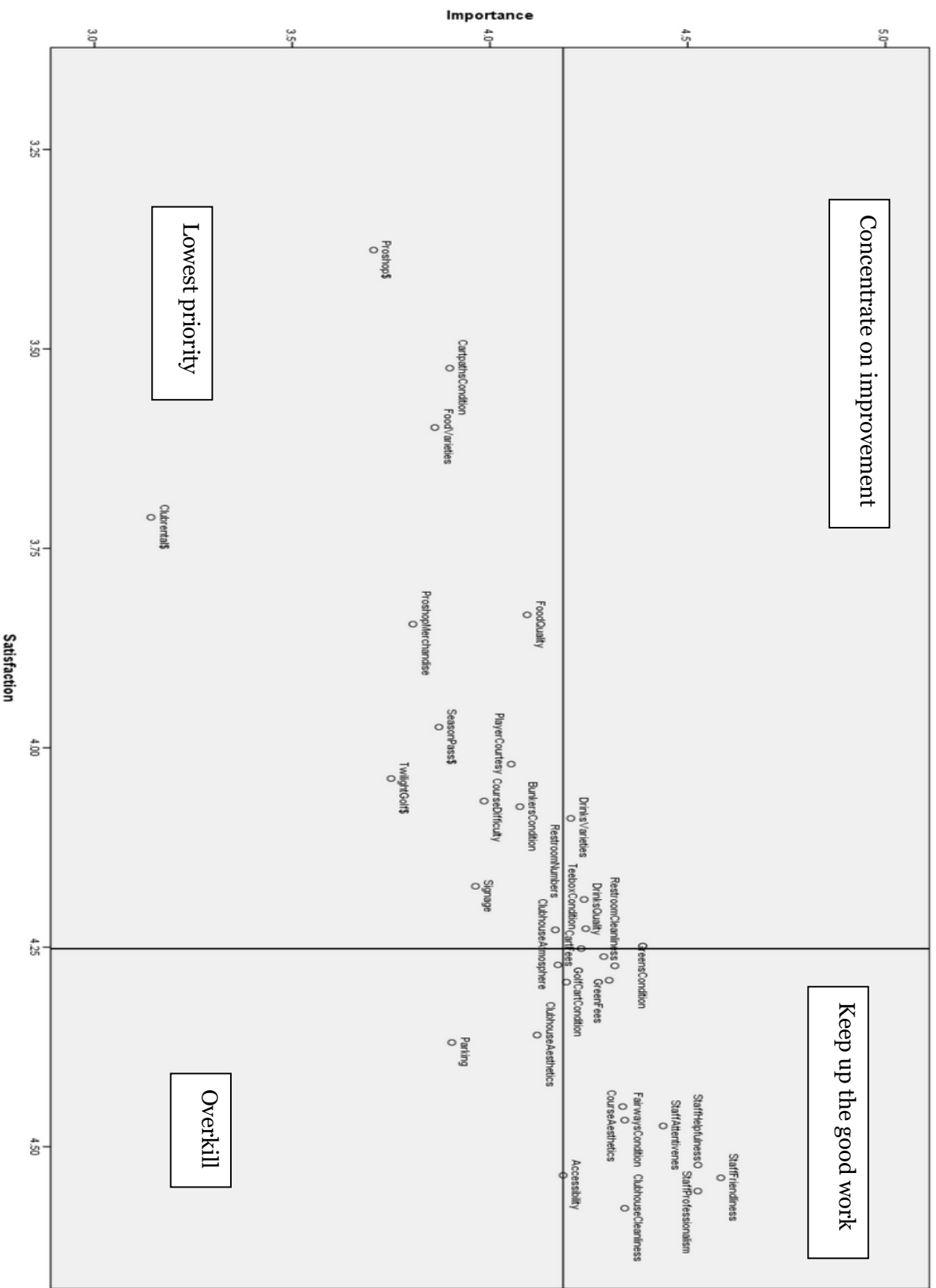
Course

The Course section of the survey asked golfers to rate the difficulty of the course, condition of greens, condition of tee boxes, condition of bunkers, condition of fairways, condition of cart paths, condition of golf carts, overall visual appeal and courtesy of other players. Items that scored in the “lowest priority” quadrant are the condition of bunkers, condition of cart paths, difficulty of course, and the courtesy of other players. Tee box conditions are the only item that placed in the “concentrate on improvement” quadrant. Items that scored above average in both satisfaction and importance were then the condition of greens, condition of the golf carts, condition of fairways, and the overall visual appeal of Indian Bluff.

Clubhouse Amenities

The Clubhouse Amenities section of the survey included items such as cleanliness and visual appeal of the clubhouse, social atmosphere, variety and quality of food, variety and quality of drinks, number of restroom facilities and their cleanliness, as well as the merchandise available at the pro shop. Again, this section of the survey had high distribution in both satisfaction and importance. Items in this section with the lowest priority include variety and quality of food, the merchandise available at the pro shop and the number of restrooms. The items that scored high on satisfaction but low on importance were the visual appeal of the clubhouse and its social atmosphere. The items with the highest rating of satisfaction and importance was the cleanliness of the clubhouse and the restrooms. Two items, the variety and quality of drinks scored lower than average on satisfaction and higher than average on importance, meaning Indian Bluff should concentrate on improvements here.

8



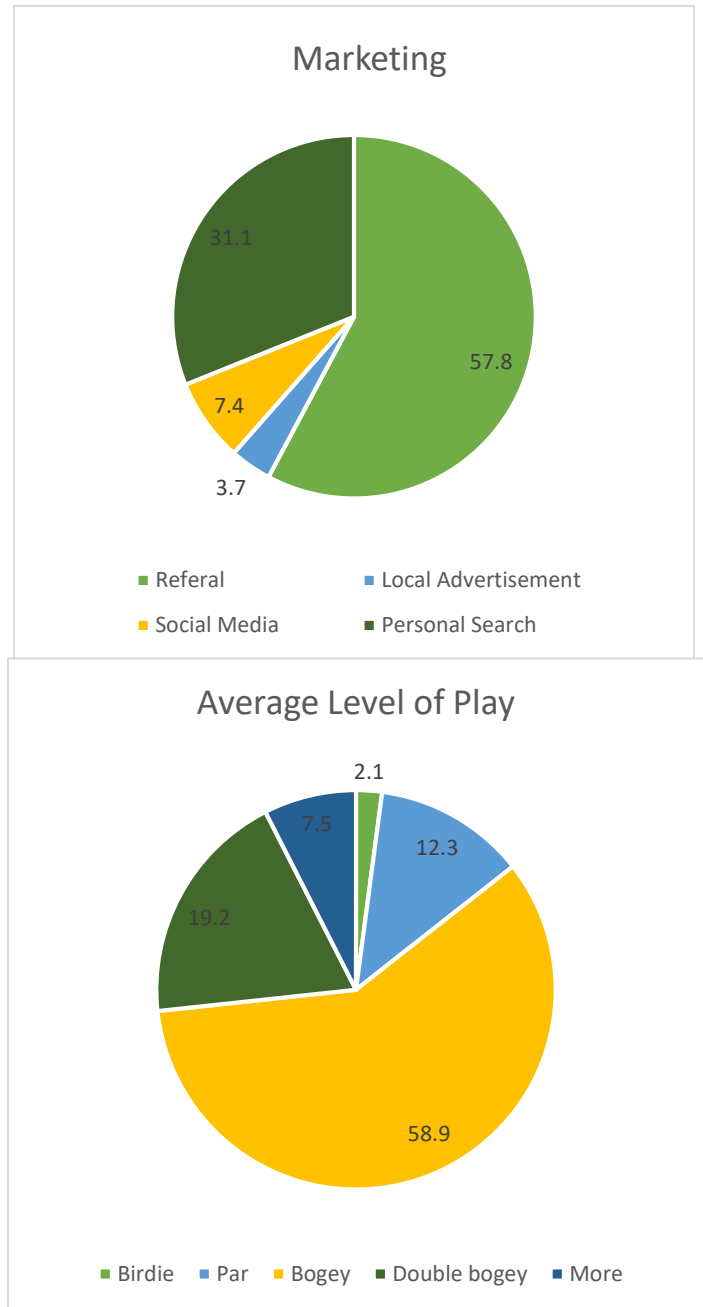
2) Data about the Golfer Characteristics

Marketing

In the distributed survey, golfers were asked to indicate how they heard about Indian Bluff Golf course. They were given four options including referral, local advertisement, social media, and personal search. 57.8% of respondents indicated that they heard about IB through a referral. 31.1% said they heard about IB through personal search. The remaining 11.1% came from social media and local advertisement. The data either indicates that word of mouth is very important and that social media and advertising is not to the current demographic golfing at Indian Bluff.

Average Level of Play

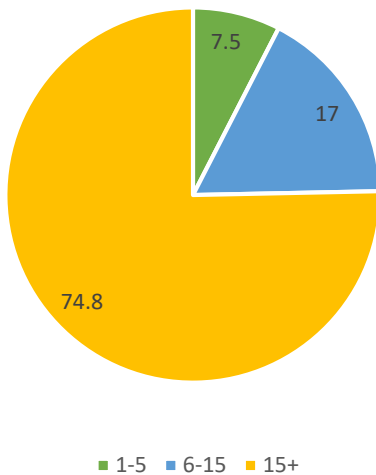
The survey indicated that the average golfer at IB self identifies as a bogey player. 58.9% of golfers chose bogey when asked to describe their average level of play. 2.1% self-identified as a birdie player, and 12.3% self-identified as a par player. 19.2% self-identified as a double bogey player, and the remaining 7.5% of golfers at IB indicated that they self-identified as having an average score greater than double bogey. Indian Bluff should take away that the majority of the golfers see themselves as “average” recreational golfers.



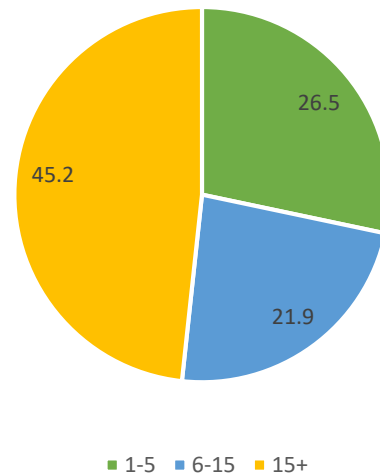
Frequency of Play

A total of 74.8% of golfers at IB indicated that they play more than 15 times per season. 17% said they play 6-15 times per season and 7.5% said they only play 1-5 times per season. When asked to specify how many times per season they golf at Indian Bluff specifically, 45.2% indicated they play at IB more than 15 times per season. 21.9% said they play at IB 6-15 times per season, and 26.5% said they play at IB 1-5 times per season. The great majority of the golfers are frequent repeat players at Indian Bluff.

How many times per season they play golf

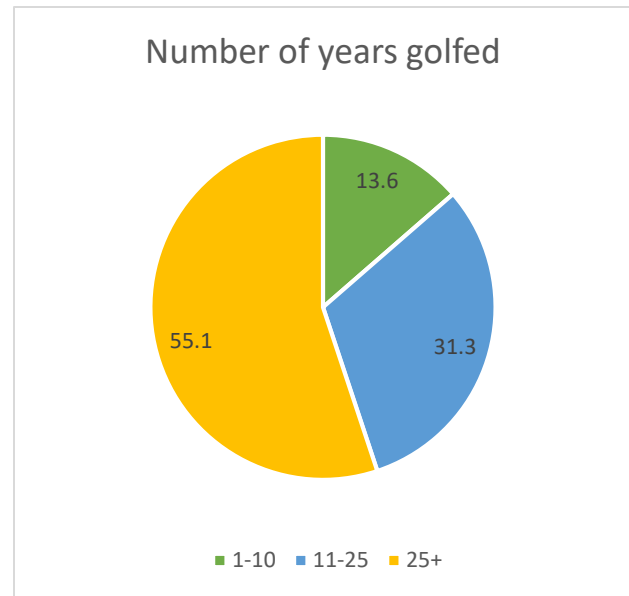


How many times per season they golf at Indian Bluff



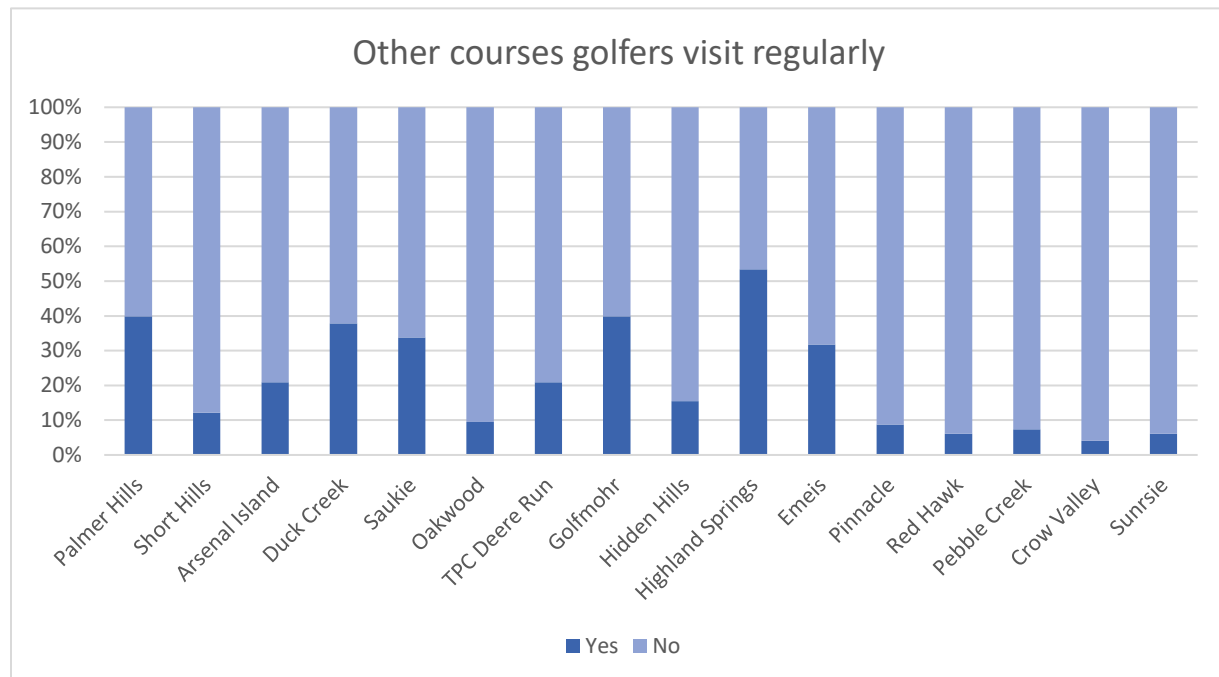
Years of Play

The data indicates that 55.1% of the golfers at Indian Bluff have been playing golf for over 25 years. 31.3% have been playing golf for 11-25 years, and 13.6% of golfers have been playing for 1-10 years. The majority of golfers at Indian Bluff are experienced and have been playing for a long time.



Competitors

Golfers at Indian Bluff were given a list of 16 other local golf course in the area, and were asked to circle any of the other courses that they golf at regularly. There were five golf courses that scored higher than 33%, meaning over a third of IB golfers regularly golf there. These five golf courses were Palmer Hills, Duck Creek, Saukie, Golfmohr, and Highland Springs. The local golf course that IB golfers are most frequently golfing at is Highland springs which 53.4% of IB golfers visit regularly.



Demographics

The population at Indian Bluff is predominately older males. The average age of golfers at Indian Bluff is 58 years old with a standard deviation of 14 years. This means that the majority of golfers at Indian Bluff are between the ages of 44 and 72. 80% of the golfers at Indian Bluff are male and 20% are female. When asked to supply their zip code, Indian Bluff golfers indicated 24 different locations. 33.8% of golfers at IB indicated that they came from the zip code 61265 in Moline, Illinois, and the second highest percentage of 11.7% came from 61201 in Rock Island, Illinois.

3) Qualitative Data

The last portion of the survey that allowed golfers to make additional comments resulted in two major themes. The first topic was about the snack shack not being open in the back 9. Many of the comments suggested having a beverage cart as well. The second theme was about a particular former employee who was not hired back, and people's disappointment with this decision. A range of additional comments were made. Some of these comments included the "tee times hot deals" not working on the website, the speed of greens being too fast, moving the senior men's tee box, needing a larger main entrance sign, having range finders in the carts, wanting the option of a cart pass to go with season passes, complaints about clubhouse management, the rough being too long, how great the flowers look, how great the course looks, satisfaction with the staff, and a pothole near hole 4.

Conclusions

Based on the data collected, the following conclusions have been drawn. As previously noted, we can assume that the general feedback from the golfers would be positive due to the fact that they have chosen to come to Indian Bluff over the other courses in the area, so those who do not come to Indian Bluff were not surveyed. Looking at Figure 1, the satisfaction and importance graph, Indian Bluff is generally allocating their resources in ways that current golfers find satisfying.

Looking at the population being served, we can also conclude that the average golfer at Indian Bluff is an older male from the Moline/Rock Island area. These golfers are also experienced, consider themselves average recreational golfers, and plan to return to Indian Bluff in the future. It is also important to note that the majority of players at Indian Bluff also golf at other courses in the area, particularly Highland Springs.

Recommendations

Based on the golfers' feedback regarding their satisfaction and importance ratings for experiences at Indian Bluff, we recommend focusing on improving the variety and quality of drinks available in the clubhouse, as well as the condition of the tee box. In order to give golfers the best experience possible, we would also recommend opening up

the back 9 snack shack for golfers to get refreshments and/or food halfway through their game, as this would improve their overall golf experience at Indian Bluff.

The collected data indicates that social media and local advertisements do not have impact on the current users of Indian Bluff. However, looking at the future of Indian Bluff and its longevity in the community, we recommend trying to expand the customer base particularly to a younger demographic. According to our results, only 11.1% of current golfers became aware of Indian Bluff through social media and advertisements. Further research into ways to attract a more diversified population of golfers could include investigating both promotional and programming strategies aimed at demographic cohorts that currently have lower rates of participation at Indian Bluff. For example, the potential for social media designed specifically to attract younger golfers and programs tailored to female golfers could be explored through further evaluation projects.

Appendix

Additional Comments

- 14. Website did not work for me on the tee times hot deals.
- 20. The way the greens keeper is making the greens is not fair to the average golfer. Way too fast.
- 21. Do not prefer the change in the speed of the greens. Much too fast for average golfer. Would be nice if the showers worked in the lady's room!
- 36. Hole #9 does not meet back to club house. No way to get food drinks in the middle of your game. No cart lady at the concession stand is not open all the time even if it's hot outside.
- 46. (comment only) Move all senior men's tee box. It isn't fair for women to tee off the same tee box as senior men - we no longer play in any golf outings due to the fact women have no advantage.
- 47. For taking this you should get a free beer instead of water.
- 52. OPEN THE SNACK SHACK!
- 64. Back 9 snack bar should be open.
- 72. The rough is too long for a public golf course. It creates slow play and takes too long to find balls.
- 74. Main entrance sign needs to be bigger. Range finder in cart.
- 80. Course looks great and am very happy with the changes made over the last couple of years. Kinda upset Drea was not asked to return back to work.
- 81. Sad to see Drea isn't back for Golf Season.
- 82. NOT SURE WHAT HAPPENED TO DREA BUT SHE WAS AN ADDED PLUS WHO WAS ATTENTIVE AND ALWAYS HELPING OUT. *HOPE SHE COMES BACK.*
- 85. Andrea is missed. Wish she was back
- 86. Where is Dre!! Come on MAN!!
- 87. Drea should be back!!! That was wrong!!!
- 96. First time playing at I.B. Very good experience. Will come back.
- 98. GREAT PRICES & MERCH IN PRO SHOP!
- 102. Love all the flowers. Course is in great shape. Greens are TOP NOTCH.
- 103. Todd does not do a good job with the clubhouse & is driving away golf outings & customers.
- 109. 12 is still hard!
- 110. Young lady doing research was very pleasant!! Beer is WAY overpriced! Call master gardener.
- 120. I (heart) u
- 125. yes.
- 126. sorry
- 134. I did play in an event this past Saturday; it was very organized and the staff was terrific!! :)
- 123. I have played at Indian Bluff since 1970
- 31. After 9 holes, #10 should be your building to have refreshments. Pop, beer, hotdogs. Not in the building outback. Change location. You will start making money. Outback doesn't work. O.K.
- 158. Possibly have a cart pass when you buy a season pass.
- 159. Very Satisfied with Staff
- 160. Need to open concession stand more often and have beverage cart available.
- 161. NEED TO HAVE CONCESSION STAND OPEN OR BEV. CART
- 162. NEED TO HAVE THE BACK CONCESSION STAND BEV CART IS NEEDED
- 168. The grounds keeper is doing a great job.
- 169. Course is great. I suck.

70. Marty is the best counter person at any course I play. Jay has done a great job on the course. I think it could be a better course if we got a new manager. Replace Todd!

176. Mark the big "pothole" on 4 thanks :)

175. Hole (4)? By concession stand at bottom of hill needs marked!! One is but one is not! Very dangerous