

1/22/91

CATALOG OF VISITOR SURVEY QUESTIONS

The federal role in outdoor
recreation

Voyageurs Park showdown pits
snowmobilers, preservationists

Ins and Outs: Staying in a Job,
Saving, Seen as Trends for the '90s

**Can Marketing
Save The
National
Parks?**

VOICES / Do you like the way the national parks are run?

More Surveys, Fewer Answers



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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IN REPLY REFER TO:

January 22, 1991

Memorandum

To: Park Superintendents

From: Assistant to the Director for Science and Technology

Subject: CATALOG OF VISITOR SURVEY QUESTIONS

SUCCESS..... the OMB has approved the CATALOG OF VISITOR SURVEY QUESTIONS.

First, what is in the CATALOG? The CATALOG OF QUESTIONS is made up of a set of 119 standardized visitor survey questions (and responses). The origin of these questions is from previous visitor surveys conducted by the NPS, the Forest Service, university researchers, etc. Any subset of these 119 CATALOG questions can be selected to quickly and inexpensively construct a visitor survey questionnaire for an individual park. The 119 questions are aggregated into eight categories:

1. Visitor characteristics - - - deals with demographic information such as visitor age, home town, occupation, education, income, etc.
2. Travel characteristics - - - provides data for planning park transportation systems, and for other planning activities.
3. Visit characteristics - - - provides data about kinds and frequency of visits, in-park activities, park-use patterns, etc., for use in resource management, interpretation, patrol scheduling, etc.
4. Visitor feedback and evaluation - provides input to park managers about visitor reactions to programs, management actions, restrictions, services, etc.
5. Economics - - - - - provides data about visitor expenditures for use in determining economic impacts.
6. Carrying capacity/crowding - provides data about people interactions and conflicts that affect visitor satisfaction or the visitor experience.
7. Visitor values - - - - - provides information about visitor interests, expectations, perceptions, attitudes, behavior, recreational preferences, etc.

8. Recreational lifestyles - - - provides information about visitor recreational habits and participation in recreational activities.

Second, do you have to select questions from the CATALOG if you wish to develop a visitor survey questionnaire? Absolutely not. You are free to use or not use CATALOG questions, as you wish.

Third, why might you be interested in the CATALOG? OMB has reviewed and approved each of the 119 questions in the CATALOG. This means that when a visitor survey questionnaire is constructed using questions taken from the CATALOG, OMB not only will require much less documentation and justification materials but also will expedite significantly its review and approval of the survey package. There are three additional factors to consider. First, if you use standardized CATALOG questions in your visitor survey questionnaire, you will be able to compare the responses given by your visitors with the responses given to the same questions by visitors at other parks. Second, you additionally may wish to establish current baseline visitor data for your park, and then re-ask the same standardized questions at a later date in order to detect changes over time or to establish trends in visitor use patterns, values, attitudes, etc. Third, because the CATALOG questions have been used successfully in previous surveys, this usually will eliminate the need for expensive and time-consuming screening and pretesting of the questionnaire.

Finally, why might one elect NOT to use the CATALOG? Very simple; the questions included in the CATALOG may not deal with the issues of interest to your park; or alternatively, you might wish to state the questions and/or their response categories differently from the format presented in the CATALOG. These are both totally valid reasons for developing a customized park-specific visitor survey questionnaire. Use the CATALOG if it will help you; if it won't, develop a set of questions that better suits your specific needs.

In summary, if you are in the market for a visitor survey, you may wish to look through the CATALOG and see if it contains the kinds of questions that will elicit the information you require. If the CATALOG does this, its use likely will save you considerable time and money. Your Regional Sociologist has copies of the CATALOG, together with instructions for its use. Or we can supply you with CATALOG materials directly if you prefer. Contact Jean Handsberry on FTS 8-343-8123.



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