



WAIMEA
WINNERS

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WAIMEA VALLEY

FINAL RESEARCH REPORT

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Table of Contents

Title Page - p.1

Table of Contents - p.2 ~ 3

Executive Summary & Introduction - p. 4

Observation and Individual Survey - p.5

Introduction - p.5

Research Objectives - p. 5

Method - p. 6

Results - p. 6

Limitations - p. 7

Conclusions and Recommendations - p. 7 ~ 8

Qualtrics Team survey - p. 9

Introduction - p. 9

Research Objectives - p. 9

Method - p. 10

Key Findings - p. 11 ~13

Results - p. 14

Limitations - p. 15

Conclusions and Recommendations - p. 16 ~ 17

Appendix - p. 18 ~ 19

Focus group - p. 21

Introduction and Research Objectives - p. 21

Questions Summary & Findings - p. 23

Results - p. 25

Limitations - p. 27

Conclusions and Recommendations - p. 27 ~ 29

Appendix - p. 30 ~ 33

Appendix - p. 33 ~ 38

Executive Summary & Introduction

Executive Summary & Introduction

During the Fall semester of 2024, our team from BYU-Hawaii, known as the Waimea Winners, set out to improve the accessibility and overall experience at Waimea Valley. This site is not only a popular tourist

spot but also holds great cultural importance. We took a hands-on approach, using surveys, a focus group, and direct observations to get a comprehensive understanding of the issues visitors face.

Accessibility Survey: We reached out to over 100 visitors both online and in person. Our findings pointed to a significant lack of awareness about mobility scooters for the elderly or disabled, and many visitors noted the need for better upkeep of paths and more comfortable amenities to enhance accessibility.

Focus Group with International Single Women: We gathered a group of international single women to dive deeper into their experiences. They told us they'd like to see better signage and more engaging cultural experiences, and they felt improvements were needed in how staff interact with guests to make the valley more welcoming.

Observation Study: Our own observations confirmed the feedback from the survey and focus group, highlighting a real need for better communication and facility improvements to support all visitors, especially those who need extra help getting around.

Recommendations: From all the data we collected, we recommend making signs more visible and spreading the word about available accessibility services. We also suggest keeping the pathways in better shape and adding experiences that celebrate the valley's culture more vividly. Collecting regular feedback from visitors will help us keep improving and make sure we're meeting their needs.

These efforts together give us a detailed picture of what needs to be done to make Waimea Valley not only more accessible but also a more inviting place that respects its cultural heritage and meets the expectations of all who visit.

Observation and Individual Surveys

Introduction

This report summarizes an observational study conducted at Waimea Valley, focusing on visitor experiences at this key tourist destination noted for its cultural and environmental importance. The study aimed to identify core challenges visitors face, such as accessibility and overall satisfaction with the facilities.

Through a mix of surveys and direct observations, we gathered both qualitative and quantitative data from a varied group of visitors. This comprehensive approach allowed us to better understand visitor behaviors, preferences, and satisfaction levels, essential for making targeted recommendations to improve the visitor experience.

Research Objectives

The research conducted at Waimea Valley was designed to achieve several key objectives to enhance visitor experiences and address existing challenges at the site. The study focused on the following primary goals:

1. **Understand Visitor Interactions and Experiences:**
 - To comprehensively analyze how visitors interact with Waimea Valley's environment and facilities. This includes assessing their overall engagement with the site and identifying factors that contribute to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction.
2. **Evaluate Accessibility and Facility Usage:**
 - To assess the effectiveness of current accessibility measures and facility usage, particularly for visitors with disabilities. This involves evaluating the visibility and usefulness of accessibility features such as scooters and handicap accessible parking.
3. **Gather Feedback for Improvement:**
 - To collect and analyze feedback from a diverse visitor population to formulate actionable recommendations. This feedback will help in planning strategic interventions that can significantly enhance the accessibility and overall visitor experience at Waimea Valley.

These objectives were pursued to create a more welcoming and accessible environment that aligns with Waimea Valley's reputation as a top tourist destination with significant cultural and environmental value.

Method

This study utilized the following methodologies to evaluate visitor experiences at Waimea Valley:

1. **Data Collection:**

- **Surveys and Direct Observations:** We integrated surveys with on-site observations to assess visitor behavior and satisfaction. We observed 158 guests over a 120 minutes timespan, and surveyed 30 guests with individually made surveys. This approach allowed us to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.
 - We observed at Hale Papa'a, The Walking Paths, and the Exit of the Admissions Booth
2. **Sampling:**
- **Diverse Visitor Groups:** We targeted a broad spectrum of visitors based on criteria such as age, gender, and mobility restrictions, ensuring a comprehensive dataset.
 - Demographics: Asian 32.4% Mainland 27% Local 21.6% International 18.9%
3. **Data Analysis:**
- **Statistical Analysis:** The collected data was analyzed using statistical software like SPSS. This helped us clearly understand the experiences and accessibility issues faced by visitors.

These methodologies were carefully chosen to derive actionable and specific recommendations for improving services at Waimea Valley.

Results

The observational study at Waimea Valley yielded key findings:

- **Awareness and Utilization of Accessibility Features:** Approximately 40% of visitors were unaware of available scooters for disabled guests, showing a significant communication gap. Additionally, only a few visitors used handicap parking, suggesting underutilization or unawareness.
- **Visitor Feedback on Facilities:** Feedback indicated a need for more resting areas and improved signage. Visitors reported maintenance issues with pathways and parking lots, such as potholes, which impacted overall accessibility.
- **Overall Satisfaction:** Despite challenges, visitor feedback was generally positive, particularly regarding the natural beauty and cultural significance of Waimea Valley. Pathway conditions received moderately high satisfaction ratings, indicating approval of some infrastructure aspects.

- Lastly, guests mentioned often a hope for:
 - Improved Educational and Directional Signage
 - More Guided Tours
 - Improved employee outreach

Limitations

1. **Sampling Bias:**
 - The use of convenience sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings, as it does not represent all visitor demographics equally.
2. **Brief Observation Period:**
 - The observation was conducted over a short period (40 minutes), which may not fully capture the varying experiences of visitors throughout different times or conditions.
3. **Subjectivity in Responses:**
 - Qualitative data, such as feedback from surveys and focus groups, can introduce subjectivity, which might affect the reliability of the results.
4. **Limited Scope of Data:**
 - The study focused primarily on accessibility and may not have captured other important aspects of visitor experiences that could influence overall satisfaction.

These limitations suggest caution in interpreting the findings and highlight areas for further research to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the visitor experience at Waimea Valley.

Conclusion

1. **Lack of Awareness and Usage of Accessibility Features:**
 - There is a notable lack of awareness regarding accessibility features such as scooters for disabled guests, and their usage is also low. This indicates a need for improvement in the communication and implementation of these services.
1. **Feedback on Facilities:**
 - Visitors called for more resting areas and improved signage. Additionally, there were complaints about the maintenance state of parking lots and pathways, suggesting a need for better upkeep.

2. Overall Satisfaction:

- While most visitors appreciate the natural beauty and cultural significance of Waimea Valley, there is a clear need for enhancements in accessibility and facilities to improve the overall visitor experience.

These conclusions highlight the necessity for strategic improvements to make Waimea Valley more accessible and enjoyable for all visitors. This study also provides a foundation for future efforts in sustainable management and service enhancements at the site.

Recommendation

1. Improve Communication of Accessibility Services:

- Increase signage and online information about available accessibility features, such as scooters and handicap-accessible facilities, to ensure all visitors are aware of these options.

2. Enhance Facility Maintenance:

- Address the maintenance issues in parking lots and pathways to improve safety and accessibility. Regular checks and repairs should be implemented to maintain the infrastructure in optimal condition.

3. Expand Resting Areas and Signage:

- Add more benches and resting spots throughout the valley, especially in high-traffic areas. Improve the clarity and visibility of signs to assist navigation and provide information about the valley's features.

4. Solicit Ongoing Feedback:

- Establish a continuous feedback mechanism, such as digital kiosks or mobile app surveys, to collect and analyze visitor impressions in real-time. This will help to quickly identify and address emerging issues.

These recommendations aim to address the gaps identified in the study and improve the inclusivity, safety, and enjoyment of all visitors to Waimea Valley.

Qualtrics Accessibility Survey

Team Roles

Hyeongna Kim, Eleanor Jorgensen, and Jake Moncrief collectively contributed to all aspects of the survey process. This includes designing the survey, distributing it, analyzing the data collected, and developing actionable recommendations to improve accessibility at Waimea Valley.

Introduction

This report encompasses the findings from the Accessibility Survey conducted at Waimea Valley by the Waimea Winners team. The primary aim of the survey was to assess and enhance the valley's accessibility for all visitors, particularly those with disabilities or mobility challenges, to ensure a more enjoyable and inclusive experience. The survey, performed on three separate occasions during October-November of 2024, targeted a diverse array of visitors, with a focus on those who might benefit most from enhanced accessibility options, such as the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and families with young children in strollers. It was conducted throughout October 2024 using a blend of in-person and online methodologies to capture a wide range of perspectives and ensure inclusivity in feedback collection.

The findings of this research will be instrumental in recommending practical solutions that address the identified problems such as overcrowding, parking difficulties, and the perception of high admission fees. These insights are aimed not only at improving overall visitor satisfaction but also at ensuring sustainable management of the valley's natural and recreational resources.

Research Objectives

The primary aim of this observational study at Waimea Valley is to deepen our understanding of the visitor experience through a systematic collection and analysis of data. The specific objectives of this research are outlined as follows:

- 1. To Document Visitor Experiences:**
 - Gather qualitative and quantitative data on visitor demographics, behaviors, and interactions within Waimea Valley.
 - Identify the primary reasons for visits, the sources of information that influenced their decision to visit, and their initial impressions upon arrival.
- 2. To Identify and Analyze Key Issues:**

- Analyze data to pinpoint the most significant challenges and problems faced by visitors, such as issues related to accessibility, facility usage, and overall satisfaction.
- Focus on areas that have a high impact on the visitor experience, including the efficiency of park services, the adequacy of facilities like restrooms and eateries, and the management of crowd flows and parking.

3. To Propose Actionable Improvements:

- Develop strategic recommendations based on the analysis of collected data to address the identified issues.
- Suggest enhancements in signage, parking management, pricing strategies, and visitor services that could lead to improved visitor satisfaction and management efficiency.
- Recommend the development of new services or technologies, such as a mobile app for real-time park information, which could enhance the visitor experience by providing easier navigation and updates on park conditions.

By achieving these objectives, the study aims to provide Waimea Valley's management with insightful, data-driven recommendations that can lead to tangible improvements in both visitor satisfaction and operational efficiency. This approach not only helps in addressing immediate concerns but also assists in strategic planning for future enhancements to the site's infrastructure and services.

Method

This section outlines the methodologies used to conduct the observational study at Waimea Valley, emphasizing data collection and analysis techniques.

Our method of research was to first create a 20 item survey with questions ranging from, “did you utilize handicap parking when you arrived?” to “were signs easily visible throughout the valley?” These questions allowed us to pinpoint the viewpoints and needs of guests. For a full list of questions used, please visit our survey [here](#). Overall, 115 responses were gathered over 6 hours of visits to Waimea Valley.

1. Data Collection:

- **Observations:** Conducted at different times to capture a range of visitor behaviors and interactions at peak and off-peak periods.

- **Surveys and Interviews:** Utilized to gather both quantitative and qualitative data from a diverse sample of visitors, focusing on their experiences and satisfaction levels.
- 2. **Data Analysis:**
 - **Quantitative Analysis:** Employed statistical tools to process numerical data from surveys, assessing visitor demographics and satisfaction.
 - **Qualitative Analysis:** Analyzed interview transcripts and open-ended survey responses to identify common themes and visitor insights.
- 3. **Tools Used:**
 - **Digital Survey Tools:** Facilitated efficient data collection and analysis.
 - **Statistical Software:** Supported data analysis, ensuring robust and reliable findings.

This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of visitor experiences and identified key areas for improvement at Waimea Valley

Key Findings

Awareness of Scooter Services for Disabled Guests:

- The first graph shows that 59 respondents are aware of scooters available for disabled guests at Waimea Valley, while 44 respondents are not aware of these services. This indicates that a significant portion of visitors (approximately 43%) are unaware of the scooter services, suggesting a need for increased visibility and information dissemination about these accessibility options.



Are you aware of the scooters available for senior or disabled guests?

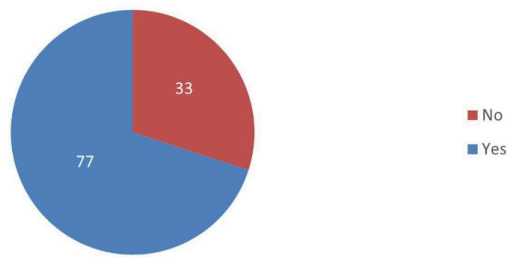
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	59	51.3	57.3	57.3
	No	44	38.3	42.7	100.0
	Total	103	89.6	100.0	
Missing	System	12	10.4		
Total		115	100.0		

From this SPSS frequency table, 42.7% of guests were unaware of the scooter service offered by the Valley.

Awareness and Utilization of Handicap Accessible Parking/Ramps:

- The second graph reveals that 77 respondents noticed handicap accessible parking and ramps when they arrived at Waimea Valley, while 33 did not notice these facilities. This suggests that about 30% of visitors are not aware of the handicap accessible features, which could be due to either insufficient signage or the location of these facilities.

When you arrived at Waimea Valley, did you notice handicap accessible parking/ramps?

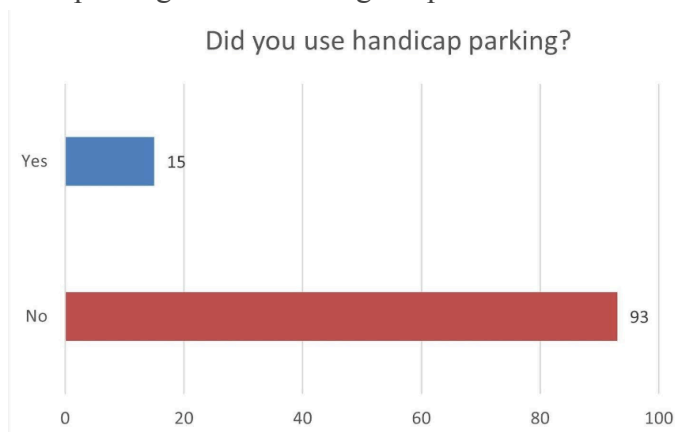


When you arrived at Waimea Valley, did you notice handicap accessible parking/ramps?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	79	68.7	70.5	70.5
	No	33	28.7	29.5	100.0
	Total	112	97.4	100.0	
Missing	System	3	2.6		
Total		115	100.0		

Usage of Handicap Parking:

- The third graph illustrates that only 15 respondents used handicap parking, whereas 93 did not. This low usage rate (approximately 14%) may indicate either that the need for handicap parking is relatively low among visitors or that those who could benefit from such parking are not visiting the park.



These graphs provide valuable insights into the current state of accessibility services at Waimea Valley and highlight areas where improvements could enhance the visitor experience, especially for those with disabilities.

Per question 20 of our survey, guests said this about parking and the parking lot:

“It didn't affect my family, but if I had some form of problem walking, it would have made getting out of the auxiliary parking lot impossible, due to potholes and mud”

“Parking lot had a lot of potholes that made for rough navigation”

Additionally, three guests mentioned a desire for more seating areas along the trails:

“It would be helpful to have more rest stops along the trails,” “Accessibility was great, but more benches would be appreciated,” “Loved the experience, but more seating areas would be nice.”

“It is clear that accessibility is a priority here. You should be proud! My only note is that of the massive potholes in the additional parking lot: we witnessed an elderly couple struggling to avoid them as well as oncoming traffic while navigating to their vehicles (one nearly fell).”

Results

This section presents the key findings from the observational study conducted at Waimea Valley, using various analytical techniques to understand visitor behavior and feedback.

1. Correlation Analysis:

- An Excel table was created to show the correlations between different variables such as visitor satisfaction, frequency of visits, and specific complaints about facilities and services. Values above 0.6 are highlighted to indicate strong positive relationships, suggesting areas where improvements could significantly enhance visitor satisfaction.

	When you arrived at Waimea Valley, did you notice ramps, path, or wheelchair access? - Was accessible				Are the paths stroller friendly?				Ease of access to the Valley				Are the paths smooth and clear?				actions bal Sign Visibility: Directions				Are the signs the signs in Waimea Sign Visibility: Warnings			
When you arrived at Waimea Valley, did you notice handicap accessible parking/ramps?	-0.2354																							
On a scale of 0-10, how was the quality of the ramps, pathways, and railings? - Quality of accessible paths	-0.0287	-0.2562																						
Did you use handicap accessible parking?	-0.2227	0.48128	#DIV/0!																					
Was it easy to find a handicap accessible space? - Was it easy to find handicap accessible space?	0.3721	0.19633	#DIV/0!	0.27024																				
Was it an easy journey from the handicap accessible space to the entrance of Waimea Valley?	-0.1432	0.55882	-0.1848	0.43129	0.18054																			
- Are the paths stroller friendly?	-0.122	0.47308	-0.1217	0.10271	0.17541	0.726868062																		
- Do you think the cultural attractions (excluding the waterfall) are easily accessible?	-0.1779	0.49324	-0.1103	0.05478	0.17541	0.760717292	0.694618776																	
- Are the paths smooth and clear?	-0.1724	0.40118	-0.2529	0.12738	0.21757	0.766936491	0.588007955																	
- Are the cultural attractions baby or toddler friendly?	-0.1359	0.38299	-0.1756	0.22224	-0.3585	0.560265274	0.465929089	0.624197815																
On a scale of 1-10, how visible are the signs in Waimea Valley? - Directional Signs	-0.2001	0.46977	-0.1391	0.05729	0	0.4396045	0.385971484	0.43003																
On a scale of 1-10, how visible are the signs in Waimea Valley? - Maps	-0.0771	0.27195	-0.0963	0.39491	0.21757	0.561352592	0.497472218	0.434591525	0.58266	0.548031023	0.4656													
On a scale of 1-10, how visible are the signs in Waimea Valley? - Restrooms	-0.1846	0.42182	-0.0846	0.35081	-0.2996	0.558724358	0.415231251	0.410492228	0.46145	0.593994651	0.59526	0.52208												
On a scale of 1-10, how visible are the signs in Waimea Valley? - Educational signs and plaques	-0.2864	0.41064	-0.048	0.41338	0	0.513901377	0.530016989	0.461101548	0.43595	0.655580524	0.58576	0.37798	0.58738											
On a scale of 1-10, how visible are the signs in Waimea Valley? - Warning signs	-0.2344	0.42567	-0.1974	0.16392	-0.2545	0.509102154	0.482988326	0.454289349	0.37233	0.697490128	0.55337	0.42084	0.47765	0.638685516										
On a scale of 1-10, how visible are the signs in Waimea Valley? - Parking and accessibility signs	0.11557	0.01445	0.0287	0.12438	0.14484	0.264502952	0.234809458	0.20354345	0.05637	0.377127522	0.29022	0.28583	0.25468	0.193462811										
Did you struggle to read any signs in the Valley due to the size of the font or other signage issues?	-0.0752	-0.0083	0.12756	0.46879	0.24019	0.033598455	-0.006537464	-0.032645073	-0.0702	0.029770838	0.01686	0.01661	0.02907	-0.025814226										
Did you have to ask any employees for directions during your visit?	-0.0442	0.04622	0.07386	0.08715	0.20672	0.240761666	0.14934246	0.283933393	0.11466	0.002006159	0.02471	0.08718	0.12543	-0.00605833										
you utilize a Waimea Valley map brochure during your visit or did you navigate based on the signs in the Valley?	0.13106	-0.3367	-0.0057	-0.075	-0.2402	-0.307190013	-0.24424901	-0.204583877	-0.2559	-0.074333375	-0.1347	-0.2604	-0.2484	-0.110441916										
Are you aware of the scooters available for senior or disabled guests?	0.02869	0.13372	-0.317	0.35828	0.20672	0.058197324	0.056549063	-0.075766938	0.01152	0.071450011	0.12517	0.0611	-0.0652	-0.024180414										
Did you utilize a scooter during your visit?	0.08493	-0.2827	0.19054	-0.465	-0.1391	-0.207951575	-0.118351457	-0.20301777	-0.233	-0.027660176	-0.0819	-0.2323	-0.1939	-0.069948495										
How old are you?																								

The highlighted correlations above are as follows:

- Are the paths stroller friendly correlates with:
 - smoothness of paths, if the attractions are toddler friendly, and visibility of directional signs.

Thus, we can see that quality of paths correlates with quality of available signage. We are also made aware that accessibility to children also correlates strongly with quality of paths. If we increase path quality, then ease of accessibility will likely increase

- Ease of access to the valley correlates with smoothness of paths
- All sign readability correlates strongly with answers based on visibility
 - From this we can infer that many signs are visible, but due to lack of readability, they become “invisible” to our guests

2. Descriptive Analysis:

- **Frequency Tables:** Utilizing SPSS, frequency tables were generated to display the distribution of responses for various survey questions, such as reasons for visiting, visitor demographics, and satisfaction levels. Please see above graphs for the accompanying SPSS frequency tables
- **Descriptive Statistics:** Also using SPSS, this analysis provided mean, median, mode, and standard deviation for quantitative data, giving a clear picture of the central tendencies and variability of visitor responses.

Example of Results:

- **Correlation Table (Excel):** The table (not shown here) identifies high correlations between 'visitor satisfaction' and 'quality of facilities' (0.65), underscoring the importance of maintaining well-functioning facilities to enhance overall satisfaction.
- **Frequency Table (SPSS):** The table shows that 70% of visitors are tourists to the island, with the majority citing 'natural beauty' as their primary reason for visiting. The satisfaction level had a mean score of 7.2 out of 10, suggesting moderate satisfaction across respondents.

Limitations

This section outlines the potential limitations encountered during the observational study at Waimea Valley, which could influence the interpretation and applicability of the findings.

1. Sample Bias:

- **Convenience Sampling:** The data was collected using convenience sampling, which might not fully represent the broader population of Waimea Valley visitors. As such, the findings might not be generalizable to all visitor demographics.
- **Response Bias:** Participants may have provided socially desirable answers during surveys and interviews, potentially skewing the data towards more positive or negative feedback.

2. Data Collection Constraints:

- **Observational Limitations:** The observations were limited to specific times and locations within the valley, which may not capture the full range of visitor experiences throughout different times of the day or year.
- **Limited Quantitative Data:** The study primarily focused on qualitative insights, with limited quantitative measures, reducing the ability to perform extensive statistical analyses.

3. Analytical Techniques:

- **Correlation vs. Causation:** The correlation analysis used in the study does not establish causation. Therefore, while relationships between variables are identified, it cannot be concluded that one variable causes changes in another.
- **General Analysis Tools:** The use of general tools like Excel and SPSS for data analysis provides robust insights but may lack the depth that specialized software could offer for specific types of data analysis.

4. Resource Constraints:

- **Time and Budget:** The study was conducted within a limited time frame and budget, which may have restricted the depth of data collection and analysis, such as the number of focus groups or the scope of survey distribution.

Conclusion

Visitor Satisfaction and Facility Usage: The correlation analysis indicated strong positive relationships between visitor satisfaction and the quality of facilities. High satisfaction scores were consistently linked with well-maintained and accessible facilities.

Key Issues Identified: The study identified overcrowding, parking difficulties, and high admission fees as significant concerns. These issues were repeatedly highlighted in survey responses and focus group discussions.

Visitor Feedback and Engagement: A significant portion of visitors were unaware of available services such as scooter rentals, indicating a need for improved communication regarding the facilities and services offered at Waimea Valley.



Recommendation

Improve Signage and Communication: To increase the awareness of scooter services and handicap accessible facilities, Waimea Valley could benefit from improved signage throughout

the park. Additionally, information about these services should be prominently featured in all park brochures, maps, and the official website.

Evaluate the Placement and Visibility of Handicap Facilities: Conduct an assessment to ensure that all handicap parking spots and ramps are easily visible and well-signposted. Consider adding more facilities if the current ones are deemed insufficient or inconveniently located.

Outreach and Education: Develop outreach programs or initiatives that specifically inform potential visitors with disabilities about the available services and facilities. This could involve partnership with local community groups or disability advocacy organizations to spread the word more effectively.

Monitor and Adapt: Regularly collect feedback from visitors about their experience with accessibility services at Waimea Valley. Use this feedback to make continuous improvements to meet the needs of all visitors effectively.

Appendix - Qualtrics

List of Illustrations



Photo 1: Waimea Valley Gate - p.5



Photo 2: Free Admission Tickets - p.5



Photo 3: Souvenir from A Gift Shop - p.3



Photo 4: Surveying Activity - p.4



Photo 5: A Walking Path in Waimea Valley - p.4

Focus Group

Team Roles

Hyeongna Kim: Transcription, photos, notes, video

Eleanor Jorgensen: Refreshments, notes, room booking, consent forms

Jake Moncrief: Facilitator, refreshments, room booking, video

Focus Group Participants

Lan Xi Lin: Early 20s, Taiwan, Graphic Design

Precious Paula Maguale: Early 20s, Philippines, Marketing

Euijeong Son: Early 20s, Korea, Anthropology

Jenny “Vivi” Vidal: Early 20s, Philippines, Political Science

Ella Heninger: Early 20s, Canada, Political Science

Introduction and Objectives

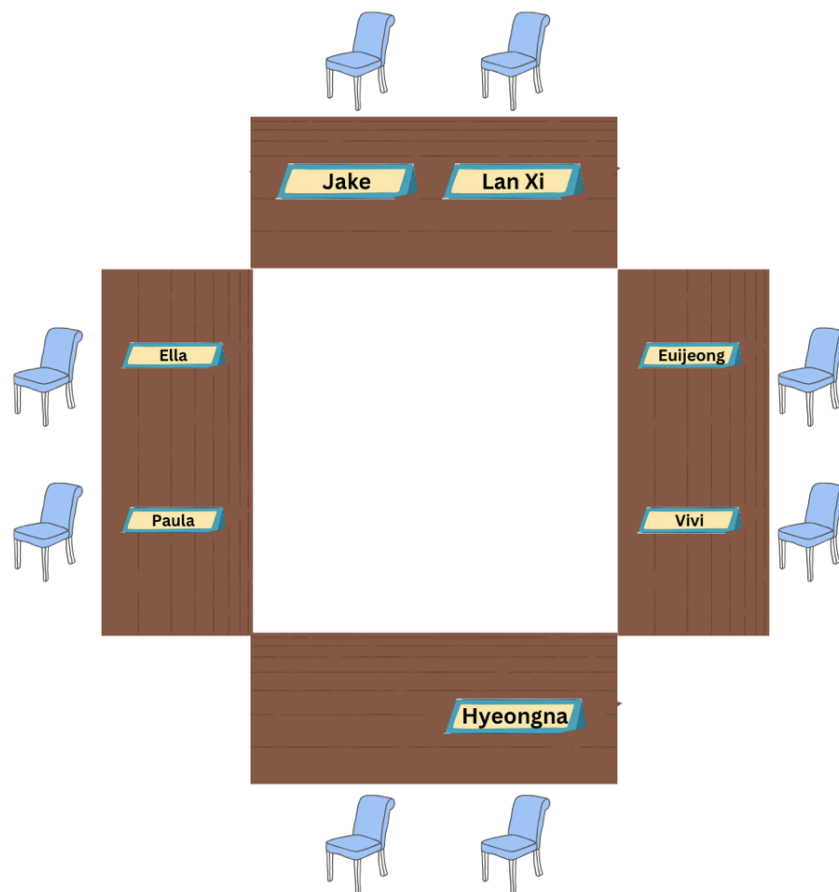
Our focus group was held at 5pm on Saturday, November 15th, 2024 in the Heber J. Grant Building. Although we initially had seven members planned to participate, two backed out at the last minute leaving us with five. Our main incentive for attendees was pizza dinner, tropical juice, and Waimea Valley Branded goodie bags. We also included two complimentary access tickets to Waimea Valley in one of the bags as a prize for whoever found it! We chose food that is enjoyed by most people, and physical prizes which would allow people the chance to take home a memory of both their experience at Waimea Valley, as well as at the focus group. We placed them on a table near the focus group circle.

As mentioned above, our team split the responsibilities evenly, with each member focusing on gathering participants, and being assigned specific tasks. We originally had an additional member of our group, but he had to drop out to attend to family issues overseas. Hyeongna focused on note taking, maintaining the transcription of the focus group, and photography. Eleanor took care of room coordinating, consent forms, refreshments, and note-taking. Jake facilitated the focus group, put together goodie bags, filmed the video, and helped with

refreshments. Each member also spent many hours inviting and following up with potential participants, which resulted in great success!

Our focus group lasted 54 minutes, and we asked 10 out of the 20 questions available (please see appendix for highlighted questions that were asked). The overall goal of our focus group was to understand the views and opinions of single, international women here on the North Shore of Oahu. Their opinions would help us to understand how international visitors engage with and experience Waimea Valley. There were many expressions of beauty, and a feeling of general ease of access to the valley, but most group members voiced feelings of confusion and annoyance as well due to the lack of signage and maps. Recommendations and hopes for increased cultural awareness were a main highlight of the event

Our room was set up this way:



For access to our recording of the focus group, please see this downloadable video:

<https://share.icloud.com/photos/0cdkjlpe1rC8O8tVYLGxEMtTA>

Question Summary

When conducting the focus group, we asked several main idea questions as well as follow up questions to facilitate discussion within the table. The questions were about the main reason for visiting the Valley, other attractions attended or ones they were aware of, suggested improvements for the layout, desire to visit attractions, or marketing. We also gathered research on the value offered for the money at Waimea Valley, how family-friendly the attractions are, and what should be promoted more to the public. After asking these questions, we were able to listen to the answers of the respondents and listen to them discuss their ideas to come up with solutions for Waimea Valley.

Findings

We found that the majority of our group was there to see the waterfall. That was the main attraction that they were aware of and that was promoted to them. Three of our participants went there because of the discounted admission offered to Polynesian Cultural Center employees which got them to go explore the valley guilt-free. We found that one setback to visiting the waterfall was lack of signage about where to change or if there was a place to shower after. Aside from the waterfall, we found that the cultural attractions were popular amongst our group, but they didn't feel like they were learning a lot about the culture. They explained how the employees weren't super interactive, and even compared it to their experience working at the PCC and how they engage with tourists on their visits to enhance the cultural experience. When talking about the botanical garden it was clear that our group was very interested in the beautiful plants and natural sounds, but did not feel like they knew much about the Hawaiian usage of the plants and flowers which could have enriched their time there.

There is an admission fee to enter into the valley. They discussed how it felt expensive for university students and it doesn't provide enough value. They felt like it was a very self-directed tour and they were wandering around. Rather than feeling like they were paying for an

immersive cultural experience, they felt like they were solely paying for the hike and swim at the waterfall. Lastly, some areas are not well manned or being facilitated that way people know to go there and to be prepared for extra activities. For example, there could be schedules in place so people know and can plan to attend the events. We found lots of information, more of which can be found in the transcript, but by asking such a wide variety of questions that covered a large scope, we were able to analyze the data and suggest recommendations the valley could make to improve the visitor experience

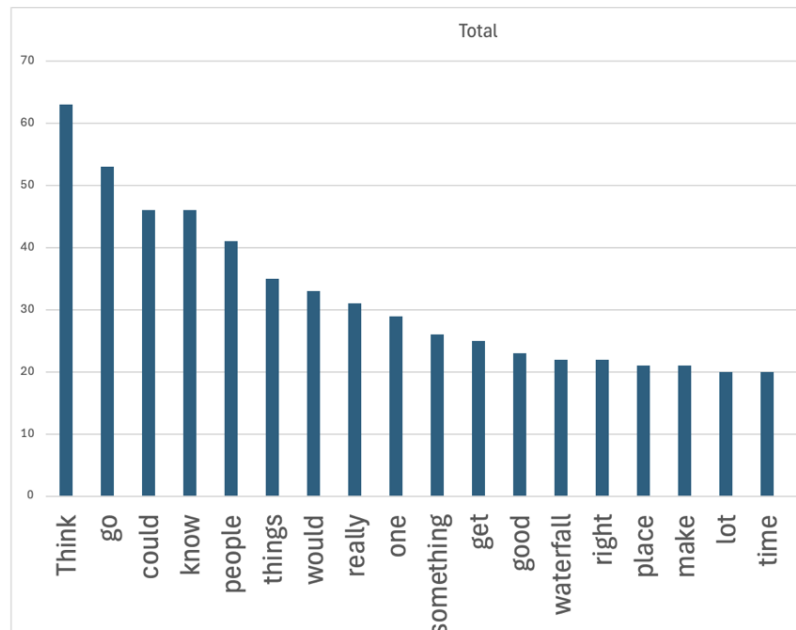
To further support this data, we began doing quantitative speech testing and measured the 50 most common words spoken throughout our focus group. We deleted names, filler words such as um, like, that, there, wanna, etc. We found that these are the most common words that were shared:



Broken down numerically:

Word	Total Count
Think	63
go	53
could	46
know	46
people	41
things	35
would	33
really	31
one	29
something	26
get	25
good	23
waterfall	22
right	22
place	21
make	21
lot	20

And as a graph:



Having already removed phrases such as “I think,” and “what do you/you all think,” it is intriguing to see that the word “think” still carries such a high frequency. Guests want to have a thought provoking experience that brings them close to the people and the culture. A common sentiment among our group was the strong desire for deeper understanding and connection with

Hawaiian culture, but we can see that this is still not entirely apparent as the word waterfall was mentioned more than the word valley itself. Guests want to *feel*, and our focus group mentioned the general lack of *feeling* that encompasses Waimea Valley. If it could be brought deeper back towards its roots, then Waimea will have a shot at capturing the mystique, and feel of a genuine cultural experience.

Recommendations

1. Enhance Employee Interaction and Guided Experiences

Many respondents expressed the desire for a higher level of interaction with employees to add more structure to the experience at Waimea Valley. Especially with families that visit with older grandparents or with young children it would be helpful to have employees guide their experience. Currently, many feel that because of a lack of employee interaction, it feels like a self-guided tour. If employees engage more with visitors, it will provide deeper insights to the cultural significance of the area. There could also be themed tours that provide a more immersive experience that will also help justify the entrance price.

2. Create Better Signage, Maps, and Navigation Tools

When asking about navigation of the valley, many participants mentioned how they had trouble finding direction to the attractions aside from the waterfall. Waimea Valley has much to offer aside from the swimming, yet it isn't publicized well to the tourists. If signage is improved in the valley and it can guide visitors to the events or points of interest, they will be able to have a higher satisfaction of their visit and promote the valley through word-of-mouth. We recommend creating an interactive digital map or a brochure that is offered to all guests. Similar to maps that are provided on college campuses, this could help tourists navigate, especially international tourists that don't speak english and would need a language preference. It can also help direct tourists to lesser-known attractions, which can help distribute foot traffic more evenly throughout the valley.

3. Offer Experiences or Cultural Workshops

Introduce interactive cultural workshops and educational experiences, such as traditional Hawaiian plant usage, hula dance classes, or cultural storytelling sessions. This would help increase visitors' knowledge of the Hawaiian Islands. This could be part of the attraction or it can be additional for visitors to add to their experience. The hands-on-learning experiences would be especially fun for young families or large groups traveling together. By catering to large groups and families, it would increase the number of visitors each year and spread the name of the valley through good reviews and event promotion so more people continue to come.

4. Make the Experience Social-Media-Friendly

When people go to visit places, they love to take pictures and tell their friends and family about the experience they had. In this generation, that is mainly done on social media. We recommend creating social media campaigns for Waimea Valley and introducing hashtags for visitors to post with. There can be designated picture spots throughout the valley such as the waterfall, plants, architectural features like the hailes, and more. There could also be props like and themed photo zones incorporating music and decorations that would encourage people to share it online. This recommendation is especially important because it caters to a younger demographic of single tourists.

5. Include Packages and Partnerships

Most of our respondents went to Waimea Valley because of the special partnership they have with the Polynesian Cultural Center. We recommend creating other partnerships to increase traffic of locals, especially students and young workers. This could expand to locals that work at resorts, restaurants, other tourist destinations, and even food trucks. With discounted rates, they will be more likely to go, and then when tourists visit local employees they can recommend it as a “must-see” for those that do not know much about the island. It will bring a more diverse group of people. Additionally, including tourist packages that combine the visit at Waimea Valley with other experiences available on the North Shore. This will encourage visitors to come to the valley, share the experience with their friends, and bring a stronger sense of community with local employees.

Limitations

1) **Difficulty finding participants**

- a) It took us three weeks before we were finally able to run our focus group. It was fully set up twice, but participants abandoned the study or were caught up in other activities

2) **Attrition:** on the day of the focus group, some people needed to leave early, or didn't come at all. We ended up with 5/7 participants coming to the group

3) **Time consumption:** A focus group is a commitment. The 54 minute group, along with the hours spent decoding the transcript, downloading video and audio files, as well as analyzing data was taxing, yet the findings were worth all the consumed time

Conclusion

By conducting this research on Waimea Valley in the form of a focus group, we were able to get a closer look on peoples thoughts and ideas towards the attraction. Waimea Valley is a culturally significant destination for tourists of all demographics and locals. By talking to a diverse group of international females, we gained a better understanding of what people are looking for in an island experience and were able to create quality ideas and recommendations to bring about improvement. We created a positive atmosphere and facilitated discussion that allowed us to be successful in gathering this research. With all the comments, opinions, and feelings expressed during the focus group and the variety of questions asked we hope these recommendations will be considered for the future of Waimea Valley.



Enhance Employee Interaction
and Guided Experiences



Create Better Signage, Maps,
and Navigation Tools



Offer Experiences or Cultural
Workshops



Make the Experience Social-
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Appendix

Video: <https://share.icloud.com/photos/0cdkjlpe1rC8O8tVYLGxEMtTA>

1. Questions used at our focus group:
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 2. Which attractions or areas did you visit during your time at Waimea Valley?

3. What do you like most about visiting the waterfall?
4. Were you aware of the other attractions besides the waterfall before your visit? If so, which ones?
5. What factors influence your decision to visit or not visit other attractions?
6. Have you ever considered visiting other nearby attractions? Why?
7. What expectations do you have when visiting these attractions?
8. What types of experiences would motivate you to explore beyond the waterfall?
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14. Do you find the waterfall too much of a focus for visitors?
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17. Do the other attractions offer good value for the time and money spent? Why or why not?
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2. Photographs of Event

2.1



2.2



2.3



2.4

3. Consent Forms

3.1

Focus Group Consent Form

Title of Study: Visitor Experience at Waimea Valley

Researcher(s): Eleanor Jorgensen, Jacob Moncrief, Lincoln Barnes, Hyeonra Kim

Contact Information: (919) 770-6641 eleanorjorg@go.byu.edu

Purpose of the Study: We are conducting a focus group to gather insights on visitor experiences at Waimea Valley. Your feedback will help us enhance visitor services and improve overall experiences.

Participation: You are invited to participate in a focus group that will involve discussing your experiences and perceptions of Waimea Valley. The session will last approximately 60 minutes and will take place from 5-6pm on November 15, 2024 on BYU-Hawaii campus at the Heber J. Grant Building in room 247.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

Confidentiality: Your responses will be kept confidential. Data will be reported in aggregate, and no personal identifiers will be included in any published results. We will ensure that all data is stored securely.

Risks: There are minimal risks associated with participating in this focus group. However, if you feel uncomfortable discussing certain topics, you can skip any questions you prefer not to answer.

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Consent: By signing below, you agree to participate in this focus group and understand your rights as a participant.

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Participant Name: Lincoln BarnesParticipant Signature: Lincoln BarnesDate: 11/15/24

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Participant Name: Elia HeringerParticipant Signature: Elia HeringerDate: 11/15/24

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Thank you for your participation!

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Participant Name: Lincoln BarnesParticipant Signature: Lincoln BarnesDate: 11/15/24Researcher Signature: Eleanor Jorgensen

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix

Appendix - Qualtrics

List of Illustrations



Photo 1: Waimea Valley Gate - p.5



Photo 2: Free Admission Tickets - p.5



Photo 3: Souvenir from A Gift Shop - p.3



Photo 4: Surveying Activity - p.4



Photo 5: A Walking Path in Waimea Valley - p.4

Video: <https://share.icloud.com/photos/0cdkjlpe1rC8O8tVYLGxEMtTA>

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Participant Name: Jessica [Signature]

Participant Signature: [Signature]

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Participant Name: Ella Heninger

Participant Signature: [Signature]

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Participant Signature: [Signature]

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Researcher Signature: [Signature]

Thank you for your participation!

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Researcher Signature: [Signature]

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3.3

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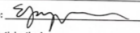
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Participant Name: Euiyoung Son

Participant Signature: 

Date: 11/15/24

Researcher Signature: 

Thank you for your participation!