

Understanding the Marketing and Management of Trails Using PESTEL Analysis

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Introduction

- Trails are an important resource for local communities because they provide health, social, economical, and environmental benefits (Headwaters Economics, 2016).
- Currently, New Hampshire has over 348,000 acres of conservation lands held by multiple agencies, towns, and private landowners (Bush, 2014). With varying owners, cohesive trail management is a challenge.
- Twelve ($N = 12$) key informants from different towns in Rockingham and Strafford County were interviewed about their trails, with the purpose of identifying management strategies to maximize trail benefits.



Study Purpose

- To understand stakeholder's perceptions of the political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal influences on the management of municipal trails.

Methods

Sampling:

- Cluster sampling by geographic location and a snowball sampling strategy was also implemented as stakeholders were identified

Questions:

- Two different interview scripts were utilized for town managers and conservation commissioners

Analysis:

- PESTEL Analysis was used to understand the management of trails. This helped how external factor influenced trail management. See chart.



Results

Political

- “There's often talk about at what point is enough, enough?... we should be proactive and we should try to encourage public access as much as possible...why would someone support spending money on conservation land either buying more land or maintaining what we have if they never use it.”

Economic

- “Increased use of the trails gets increased appreciation for the resources that are on these lands. The more people that are interested in the resources, the more favorably they might be inclined to budgeted activities to improve and care for the resources.”

Social

- “Bringing people together to talk about this trail as we were going to create it, really provided some impetus for neighborhood conversation and community building.”

Technological

- “Just a select group of people knew about them [trails]. And that trails were in very good shape because they weren't overused. Then the Internet came along, people started GPSing the trails, the parking lots are full. That's a wonderful thing right? More people are using the trails. But, it's this huge, huge increase in erosion of the trails.”

Environmental

- “The more use more degraded and maintenance required. But also the more use the healthier your community...let people know about the trails and increase the maintenance capacity. Actually the more people know about it maybe they'll donate.”

Legal

- “We have found that we have one area...that wasn't used very often, and we were having all kind of trouble. We were finding syringes, and things laying around in the parking lot. And it's because it's not a well-known place. But in the [other trail] we never have anything like that. That's used all the time.”

Conclusions

- Utilizing the PESTEL lens is an effective way to understand stakeholders perceptions of best management practices and challenges.
- Results from stakeholders indicate that management issues and strategies often intersect multiple PESTEL categories.
- For example:
 - **Political Issue:** Lack of voting support for increasing conservation land or creating funding for current maintenance
 - **Economic Solution:** Increased awareness of trails may lead to greater willingness to pay

Many issues and strategies focused on increased promotion and marketing of trails. More trail usage may lead to increased benefits and greater public support.



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