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Colin McCormack
Old Dominion University

McKenzie Mosher
Old Dominion University

Caleb Scruggs
Old Dominion University

Chris Zajchowski
Old Dominion University

Jessica Fefer
Kansas State University

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An Importance-Performance Analysis of Local and Destination Visitors to Monocacy National Battlefield

AUTHORS: Colin McCormack, McKenzie Mosher, Caleb Scruggs, Chris Zajchowski, & Jess Fefer

Introduction

- Monocacy National Battlefield (MONO) in Frederick, Maryland is a national park unit proximate to a dense metro area (NPS, 2021).
- MONO offers opportunities for visitors to learn about the Civil War but is increasingly used as urban greenspace.
- We used an Importance-Performance Analysis (Draper, 2018; Martilla & James, 1977) approach to identify perceptions of service, facility, and attribute importance and quality of locals and tourists.

Methods

- MONO managers were interviewed to determine questionnaire items and sampling sites.
- We designed a questionnaire to measure perceptions of importance and quality of selected resources (c.f., Daniels & Marion, 2006). This was supplemented with an open-ended response option.
- The questionnaire was administered on-site over 12 days in Summer and Fall 2021 across six locations at MONO.
- A postcard method was used with link and QR code for post-visit survey completion, due to COVID-19 risk management protocols.
- A 50.1% response rate was obtained from 469 intercepted groups. Responses from 235 individuals, who completed more than 80% of the survey, were included in analysis.

Local and tourist visitors to Monocacy National Battlefield seek different leisure experiences, and subsequently differ in their valuation of importance and quality of various services, facilities, and attributes.

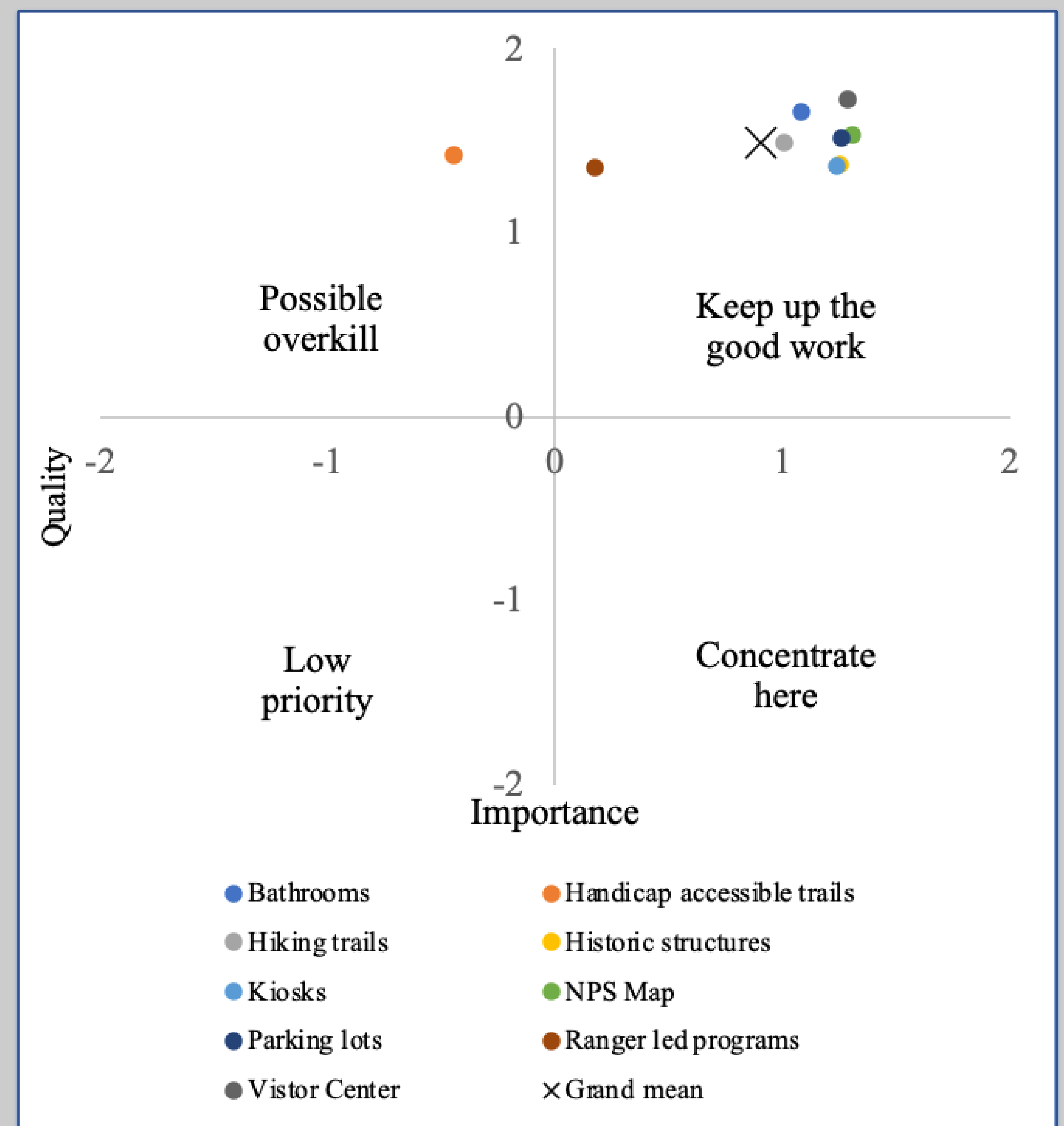


Figure 1. Tourist Importance-Performance Analysis of park services and facilities

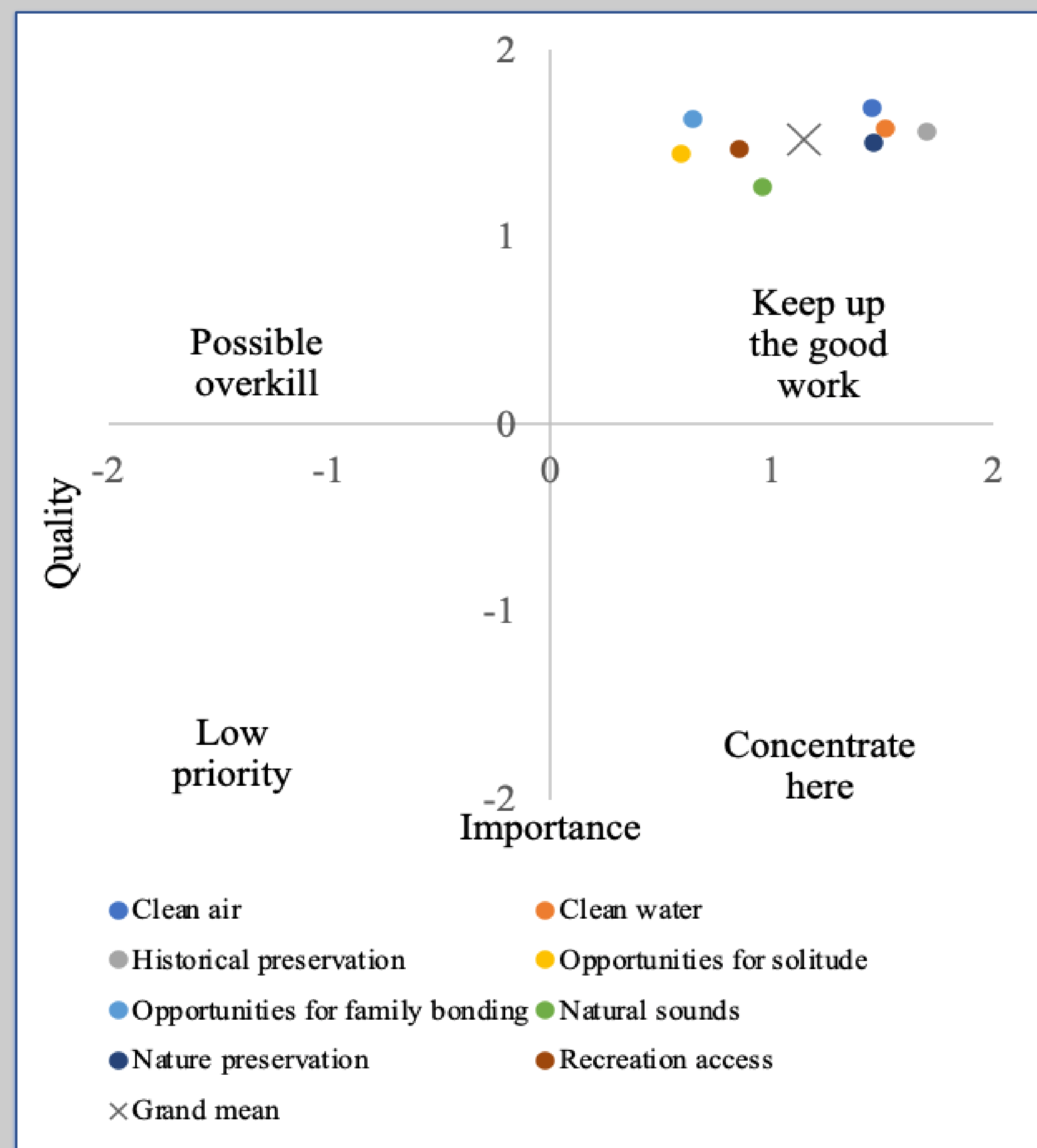


Figure 2. Tourist Importance-Performance Analysis of park attributes

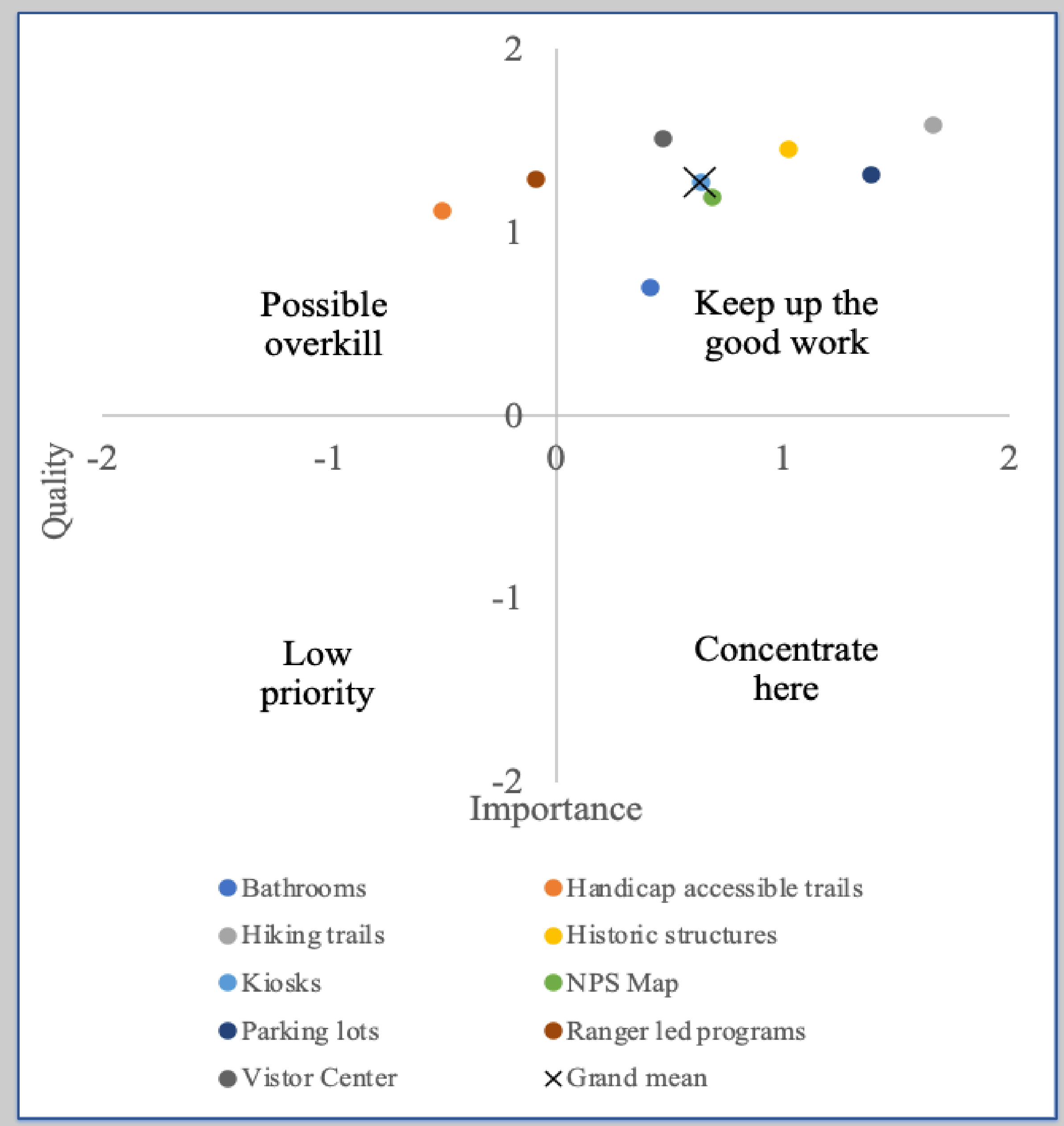


Figure 3. Local Importance-Performance Analysis of park services and facilities

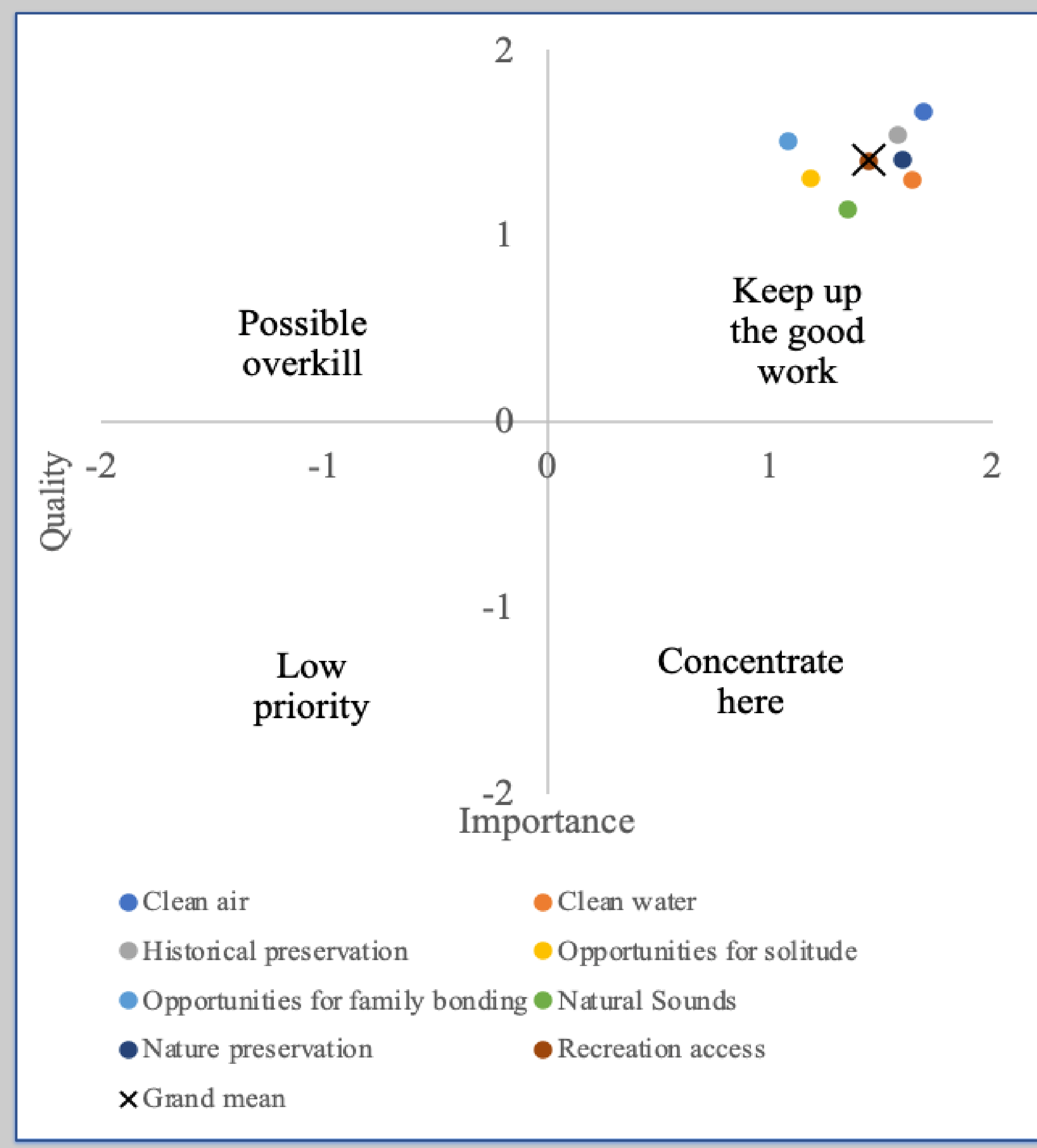


Figure 4. Local Importance-Performance Analysis of park attributes

Results

- Reported zip codes were used to segment respondents into local and tourist groups based on county (e.g., Bowker et al., 2004; Choi & Jeon, 2021). 66% of all visitors were tourists, with only 34% of visitors being local.
- Importance-Performance Analyses showed locals and tourists perceive services, facilities, and attributes as favorable (Figures 1, 2, 3, 4).
- Independent samples *t*-tests revealed significant differences between tourists and locals' ratings of importance and quality of several variables.
- Themes in open-ended responses reflected significant variables reflected in *t*-tests (i.e., visitor center, hiking trails, natural sounds, nature preservation, and kiosks and wayfinding).

Discussion

- Results suggest that tourists and locals agree that park attributes are more important than services and facilities.
- Results suggest that tourists and locals rank quality of attributes similarly yet hold different perceptions of importance among variables.
 - This reflects different use-patterns of locals and tourists.
- Results suggest that locals are more approving of services and facilities than tourists, perhaps indicating lower exposure.

Implications

- Locals' perceptions and needs differ from those of tourists, such as greater desire for recreation access. Their motivations should be considered when managing for high quality visitor experiences.
- Increase infrastructure on trails (benches, dog waste stations) or emphasize "Leave no Trace" to increase visitor support and/or adherence to management decisions.
- The park should emphasize highly-rated facilities (Visitor Center) with more accessibility.
- Staffing needs may be further met with local user volunteers.
- Brochures and materials outside the Visitor Center can meet visitor needs Tuesday-Wednesday.
- MONO should incorporate/inform users to decision-making processes to increase perceptions of quality.
- Visitor estimation procedures should consider extending counts to areas of interest to local visitors and minimize reliance on direct visitor center counts.