Should Maine fund sustainability by selling license plates?
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Introduction and Research Questions
How can Maine increase funding for programs related to energy sustainability? Introducing a new specialty license plate is one option. This research project aims to shed light on this option by answering the following research questions:

- How has the Market for Maine license plates reacted in the past to the release of new specialty license plates?
- What type of graphic design would Maine residents like to see on a license plate that supports energy efficiency/renewable energy?
- What type of energy efficiency/renewable energy programs would Maine residents be willing to support by purchasing a specialty license plate?

What are Specialty License Plates?
- The state of Maine currently allows drivers to pay an additional fee to register their passenger vehicle under one of nine specialty license plates.
- Each specialty license plate features a unique design and contributes a portion of sales revenue to a specific cause. (e.g. a portion of revenue generated from sales of the Lobster plate is contributed to the Maine Lobster Research, Education, and Development Board.)
- In the State of Maine’s fiscal year 2015 the nine Maine specialty license plates generated $2,902,200 in total revenue.

Methods
- Analysis of historical license plate sales:
  - Data provided by the Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles.
- An anonymous survey of Maine residents:
  - Distributed online by businesses and organizations.
  - Completed by 146 Maine Residents.
  - Participants were asked to use a scale from -5 to 5 to rate:
    - The visual appeal of 11 current and former Maine license plates.
    - The visual appeal of 13 potential license plates that were designed by Maine artists.
    - The appeal of 5 potential license plate slogans.
    - Their support for various types of programs that could potentially be funded by a specialty plate.

Results: Survey
- Participants demonstrated high support for programs that:
  - Promote solar power
  - Directly benefit Maine homeowners and small businesses
- Participants did not indicate strong preferences with regards to how programs finance sustainability projects (i.e. tax credits vs. grants).
- 57% of respondents left their email address so that they may be contacted if and when an energy sustainability plate becomes available for pre-order.

Would you buy this license plate?

This license plate, designed by Meo Pourreyron (a student of new media at the University of Maine), had the highest mean rating out of 13 designs included on the survey. “Sustain Maine” had the highest mean rating out of 5 slogans included in the survey.

Results: Sales Data
- Figure 1.1 shows that sales of specialty plates have historically increased as more specialty plates are added to the market.
- Figure 1.1 also shows a decrease in specialty plate sales following the chickadee replacing the lobster on Maine’s standard plate in FY2000.

Limitations
- Sampling bias (survey was primarily distributed by organizations with environmental interests)
- Self-Selection bias
- Limited data

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