1982

Outlook for Future Leisure Research

Brian S. Duffield
University of Edinburgh

OUTLOOK FOR FUTURE LEISURE RESEARCH

BY

DR. BRIAN S. DUFFIELD, DIRECTOR

TOURISM AND RECREATION RESEARCH UNIT
CHISHOLM HOUSE
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
EDINBURGH EH1 1NR
SCOTLAND

Over the past year the Tourism and Recreation Research Unit has maintained its position as one of the major international centers of research in the field of leisure studies. This progress has had to take place in a broader environment that is generally not conducive to research in the field.

It is impossible to ignore the effects that the economic recession in general and the cutbacks in public spending in particular have had on the research environment. These effects have been particularly severe for those insititutions which, like the Unit, depend to a large degree on short-term contracts funded by central government, its agencies and local authorities. It would be wrong, however, to emphasize too strongly the adverse aspects of the current economic climate; there are opportunities and challenges to which the Unit has been keen to respond. For example, faced with the severity of economic change and the accompanying social readjustment, government has had to acknowledge the significance of the social changes taking place in British society. Many of these changes now anticipate the emergence of a post-industrial society where there will be qualitative differences in the relationships which now exist between work and leisure. It is already possible to detect changes in patterns of work, and research is underway to examine the significance of these for leisure planning and provision. Similarly, force of circumstances has made it necessary to examine critically the relationship of leisure to other social issues. Thus the social problems accompanying mass unemployment, particularly among the young, and the social dislocation which has erupted in inner city areas have made plain the need for research into social and environmental policies of which leisure could be a significant part.

Economic pressures have also generated a need for research into the use, allocation and conservation of resources, reflecting a growing concern for the wise use of scarce resources and a desire to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of investment and provision. Similarly, the role of leisure, particularly tourism, as an economic activity remains high on the research agenda in terms both of its potential for job creation and its contribution to regional development.

This Unit faces the future with apprehensive optimism. Government is increasingly recognizing the importance that leisure has in people's lives and the greater prominence that it is likely to receive in public

policy as leisure time expands through longer holidays, shorter working weeks, sabbatical leave and early retirement. Even the problems of society, such as structural unemployment and the disadvantages of both rural and urban areas, are forcing increasing recognition of the contribution that proper provision for leisure can make to the quality of life. More importantly, a commitment to community-related research not least in a local context, a brief in the relevance and effectiveness of interaction between theoretical and applied research--all underpin the potential for the research to play an ever increasing role in our society.

COMMENTS

Administrator's decisions are often influenced by contacts with a vocal minority. Interactions with these types of individuals brings a slanted perspective. An informed individual with a persuasive argument can have a dramatic impact upon a leader's decision. An effective administrator should balance his decision factual baseline data.

People are asking for more personal choices and diversity in their lives, especially those that involve self-expression.