

1984

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Recommended Citation

DiGrino, B. Nick (1984) "A Comparative Analysis of Mission and Practice of Three Types of Commercial Recreation Enterprise," *Visions in Leisure and Business*: Vol. 3 : No. 3 , Article 8.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/visions/vol3/iss3/8>

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MISSION AND PRACTICE OF THREE TYPES
OF COMMERCIAL RECREATION ENTERPRISE

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ABSTRACT

This article compares the relative importance attached to the organizational purposes of three types of commercial recreation enterprise. It is based on a conceptualization reported in an earlier issue of VISIONS IN LEISURE AND BUSINESS. Chief operating executives, representing bowling establishments, fitness centers, or racquet centers were asked the relative importance of profit maximization, response to popular demand, and enhancement of human/environmental well-being. Organizational purpose was rated according to mission as well as actual practice. Bowling establishments were found to place comparatively less emphasis on enhancement of human/environmental well-being. Fitness centers and bowling establishments actually emphasize profit maximization to a lesser degree than indicated by their missions.

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INTRODUCTION

Based on the premise that every organization directs its resources toward the accomplishment of some purpose, this study compares and contrasts the defined purposes and practices of three types of commercial recreation enterprise. Organizational purpose is defined according to a typology developed by DiGrino and Blinn. (1) It is their contention that three potentially dominant purposes exist to varying degrees in all leisure service organizations; they are profit maximization, planned human and/or environmental enhancement, and responsiveness to popular demand. They also note that depending on factors unique to the organization or extraneously induced, the three purposes can result in incompatibility and confusion or responsible management of quality services that yield a respectable return on investment.

Addressing the field of commercial recreation, Kelly points out

that maximizing profit may not maximize leisure. "When the distribution is strongly skewed toward the market rather than public services, then profit rather than personal satisfaction and growth becomes the criterion of its use." (2) Is Galbraith describing the leisure marketplace with his claim that in a market economy a disproportionate amount of capital is invested in those enterprises that are most likely to produce a profit regardless of social utility or contribution to the common welfare? (3) An alternative perspective views a consuming public that identifies with a quality leisure experience, irrespective of organizations' commercial or not-for-profit status. In fact, as tax dollars make up a declining portion of public recreation's annual operating budgets, it is becoming more and more difficult to differentiate public operations from commercial enterprises. Professional education in recreation and parks is cautiously accepting commercial recreation as an integral part of the education service system, as witnessed by curriculum expansion and job placements. Recent articles in Parks and Recreation exemplify this growing trend. Realizing that some variability in purpose exists between public, private-nonprofit, and commercial leisure service operations, this study examined only selected types of commercial enterprises. Are various commercial enterprises characteristically different relative to organizational purpose? Suspecting that profitability is a primary concern, what is the relative importance of popular wants and human/environmental well-being?

METHODS

Three distinct types of commercial recreation organizations were selected for investigation; they included bowling establishments, racquet centers, and fitness centers. Where establishments provided two or more of the selected services (i.e. racquetball and fitness center) they were classified according to their predominant offerings. Organizations listing two of the three service offerings as equally important were deleted from the study. Establishments located in the three largest metropolitan areas of Illinois comprised the same frame. A mailed questionnaire was sent to chief operating executives. Overall response rate was 58 percent, with no category of organization reflecting a response rate below 47 percent. A 2X3X3 factorial analysis of variance was completed. Variation between each of the organization types was determined with the Student-Newman-Keuls (SNK) test for significant variation. The same follow-up test was used to determine if significant variation existed between mission ratings and actual practice ratings for each of the organization types. Relative importance of the three types of purpose was based on a 0-10 scale as perceived by the chief operating executives.

RESULTS

Overall variation between organization types for mission and actual purpose ratings was significant. An overview of mean responses is provided in Table 1. Bowling centers appear to place greater emphasis on profitability and less emphasis on profitability planned

human/environmental enhancement. Closer examination of profit mission ratings indicate that bowling centers significantly differ from fitness centers only. Fitness centers reported significantly lower emphasis on profit maximization than their bowling and racquet counterparts. (Table 2) Relative to profit maximization, racquet centers were the only organization type to indicate congruity between mission and actual practice. (Table 3)

Fitness centers were the only organization type to report significant difference between mission and actual response to popular wants. (Table 4) It is worth noting that there was no difference between organization types regarding this purpose. (Table 5) Such was not the case when reviewing human/environmental enhancement ratings. All organization types had mission ratings significantly higher than their actual ratings. (Table 6) Bowling centers identified significantly less concern for human/environmental enhancement, both in mission and actual practice. (Table 7)

DISCUSSION

One would expect commercial leisure enterprises to demonstrate strong commitment to maximizing financial return on resources. However, the relative importance placed on response to popular wants and enhancement of human well-being is commendable. The aerobic benefits popularly attributed to racquet and fitness center services support compatibility among the three types of purposes. The individual and family benefits afforded through the bowling experience, especially considering the slowly evolving public perception of today's bowling centers as compared to yesterday's bowling alley, should be emphasized more by proprietors. Two somewhat contradictory hypotheses are suggested by the results. As it relates to the types of organizations studied, does emphasis on one or both of the nonprofitability purposes contribute to financial success or is it symbolic of owner/proprietor failure to focus on the bottom line? This question is supported by the fact that commercial recreation business success is comparatively difficult to achieve. While the average investor/business person is attracted to a venture to "make money," too often the medium to small commercial recreation businessperson is motivated by other reasons, such as a participatory attraction to the service. Results of the study hint at both the commonality and heterogeneity among different parts of commercial recreation organizations. Commercial recreation services are capable of responding to the most ethically questionable of public wants, just as some commercial recreation offerings far surpass the public and voluntary sectors in terms of humanistic services. One challenge facing practitioners as well as researchers is to better characterize the intentions and actual practices of organizations comprising the leisure service system.

REFERENCES

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2. J. R. Kelly, *Leisure* , Prentice Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, p. 337, 1982.
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TABLE 1

MEAN MISSION AND ACTUAL RESPONSES BY ORGANIZATION TYPE

Mean Ratings (0-10)

Organization Type	N	Mission			Actual		
		A	B	C	A	B	C
Bowling	52	9.942	8.481	6.846	9.269	8.308	6.135
Fitness	53	9.075	8.755	8.981	8.660	7.811	8.113
Racquet	26	9.538	8.769	8.577	9.346	8.462	8.154

A = Profit Maximization
 B = Responsiveness to Popular Demand
 C = Planned Human/Environmental Enhancement

TABLE 2

STUDENT-NEWMAN-KEULS MISSION AND ACTUAL PROFIT
RATING DIFFERENCES

Mission and Actual Differences	F Value	Significance
Mission		
Fitness and Racquet	2.48	NS
Fitness and Bowling	8.70	P>.01
Racquet and Bowling	1.89	NS
Actual		
Fitness and Racquet	5.45	P>.01
Fitness and Bowling	4.29	P>.01
Bowling and Racquet	.07	NS

TABLE 3

MISSION AND ACTUAL PROFIT RATING DIFFERENCES
ACCORDING TO ORGANIZATION TYPE

Organization Type	N	Profit Ratings		F Ratio	SNK Within Significance
		Mission	Actual		
Bowling	52	9.942	9.269	8.85	P>.01
Fitness	53	9.075	8.660	3.36	P>.05
Racquet	26	9.538	9.346	.72	NS

TABLE 4

MISSION AND ACTUAL POPULAR DEMAND RATING DIFFERENCES
ACCORDING TO ORGANIZATION TYPE

Organization Type	N	Popular Demand Mission	Ratings Actual	SNK Within F Ratio	Significance
Bowling	52	8.481	8.308	.49	NS
Fitness	53	8.755	7.811	14.51	P>.01
Racquet	26	8.769	8.462	1.54	NS

TABLE 5

STUDENT-NEWMAN-KEULS MISSION AND ACTUAL POPULAR DEMAND
RATING DIFFERENCES

Mission and Actual Differences	F Value	Significance
Mission		
Fitness and Racquet	.00	NS
Fitness and Bowling	.45	NS
Racquet and Bowling	.49	NS
Actual		
Fitness and Racquet	2.52	NS
Fitness and Bowling	1.47	NS
Racquet and Bowling	.14	NS

TABLE 6

MISSION AND ACTUAL HUMAN/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT RATING
DIFFERENCES ACCORDING TO OROGANIZATION TYPE

Organization Types	N	Human/Environmental Impact Ratings		F Ratio	SNK Within Significance
		Mission	Actual		
Bowling	52	6.846	6.135	10.99	P>.01
Fitness	53	8.981	8.113	16.38	P>.01
Racquet	26	8.577	8.154	3.89	P>.05

TABLE 7

STUDENT-NEWMAN-KEULS MISSION AND ACTUAL HUMAN/ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT RATING DIFFERENCES

Mission and Actual Differences	F Value	Significance
Mission		
Fitness and Racquet	.76	NS
Fitness and Bowling	21.28	P>.01
Racquet and Bowling	13.99	P>.01
Actual		
Fitness and Racquet	.01	NS
Fitness and Bowling	18.27	P>.01
Racquet and Bowling	19.03	P>.01