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Job Announcement Content Analysis in Commercial Recreation and Tourism

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JOB ANNOUNCEMENT CONTENT ANALYSIS
IN COMMERCIAL RECREATION AND TOURISM

BY

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ABSTRACT

The U. S. Department of Commerce projects tourism to become the nation's leading industry by the year 2000 (American Hotel and Motel Association, 1990). Students in commercial recreation and tourism seek honest answers to the proverbial question: "What kinds of jobs are available for me?" There are several ways to answer this, but most of the approaches provide just a partial glimpse of the big picture. Faced with this problem, a content analysis was conducted of every commercial recreation and tourism industry position that was listed in the primary newspaper of a large metropolitan area for an entire year. A total of 433 commercial recreation and tourism job announcements were included in the content analysis. These announcements covered approximately 553 individual positions. Overall, a study of this type can provide and organized overview of the commercial recreation and tourism job market in a given locale.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the United States and Canada, programs in commercial recreation and tourism have been added to the traditional higher education curricula in recreation, parks, and leisure. Ten years ago only a handful of NRPA-AALR accredited institutions had an emphasis area in commercial recreation and/or tourism. Now, there are 21 accredited programs (4). Part of this increase can probably be attributed to the economic difficulties seen in the traditional recreation service areas: city, county, state, and federal government. With relatively static budgets, there has been limited growth of new jobs in most of the public sector. According to a study by Michigan State University (7) this situation is expected to continue for the near future. Meanwhile, it can be argued that significant growth has occurred in the private sector of the leisure industry. The U. S. Department of Commerce projects tourism to become the nation's leading industry by the year 2000 (2). Other sources point to growth in specific industries such as hotels, restaurants, theme parks, and resorts (1, 5, 7). It is therefore not

surprising that many university programs have changed their emphasis and/or added new curricula in commercial recreation and tourism.

Any educator with students in commercial recreation and tourism knows that these young people seek honest answers to the proverbial question: "what kinds of jobs are available for me?" There are several ways to answer this: with job bulletins from professional associations, with information about jobs gained by recent graduates, and by direct communication with industry professionals. Unfortunately, all of these approaches provide just a partial glimpse of the big picture. There needs to be a comprehensive way to assess the commercial recreation and tourism job market in a particular locale. Faced with this problem, a content analysis was conducted of every commercial recreation and tourism industry position that was listed in the primary local newspaper of a large metropolitan area for an entire year.

It can be rightfully argued that the newspaper classified section does not list every position vacancy within a community. However, even if the newspaper lists only half of the available jobs, it is probably the most comprehensive sample of jobs available. It was, therefore, the author's purpose to develop a reasonable methodology for a content analysis of commercial recreation and tourism job announcements, and to conduct an analysis of all the positions listed in a major metropolitan newspaper for one year. The data gained from the analysis would be immediately useful in advising students in the author's department. On a broader level, the methodology could be used or adapted by other educators in their own community.

METHOD

Content analysis is a research methodology that utilizes a set of procedures to make valid inferences from a body of information. The central idea is that the numerous words of the information source are classified into much fewer content descriptions. The classified data can then be quantitatively analyzed. Procedures suggested by Weber (6) and Krippendorff (3) were followed in creating the content classification and coding schemes. Employment notices from the primary Sunday newspaper in a major metropolitan community were screened for one full year. Every job notice that related directly to the commercial recreation and tourism industry was initially considered. Upon review, several types of job notices were deleted from the study:

  1. Job announcements for part-time or short seasonal (less than eight months) positions.

  2. Job announcements that were repeated from any of the previous six weeks. This was to eliminate duplicate analysis of the same position.

  3. Positions that required specific extended training that was not within the scope of the university's degree program (e.g., travel agent, air traffic controller, chef).

4. Positions that were not typically within the scope of interest of career oriented graduates (e.g., waitress, hotel bellman or housekeeper, most restaurant positions).

5. Job announcements that were actually disguised promotions for the sale of something else (e.g., cruise employment guide, military enlistments).

Information from the remaining job announcements was classified into content categories and recorded for analysis. For each category of information, decisions had to be made regarding the appropriate value labels assigned to the data. In most cases, the value label decisions were very obvious, but in some cases, the decisions required an experience based professional judgement. This was frequently the case when determining the professional level of a given position. In such cases, judgement was based on the author's 20 years experience as an educator and practitioner in the leisure industry. The categories of data are explained next.

1. Week of the Year: the week the job announcement was listed – numbered 1 through 52.

2. Month of the Year: the month the job announcement was listed – numbered 1 through 12.

3. Specific Industry: the type of business that the job annoncement concerned (e.g., hotel, tour company, sports club).

4. Position Title: title of the position being recruited (e.g., hotel front office manager, tour guide, membership sales manager).

5. Key Word: the word under which the position was listed (e.g., hotel, travel, sales).

6. Professional Level: the career level of the advertised position: pre-professional, entry level professional, supervisory/management level. This data category required some judgement based upon knowledge of career ladders within a given industry. For example, in the hotel industry, a front desk clerk and a concierge were classed as "Pre-professional", since many students can work these positions while in school. A front desk manager and a guest services director were classed as "entry level professional", since these are positions that a recent graduate with some experience can attain. The marketing manager and general manager were classed as "supervisory/management level".

7. Location: in-state or out of state status of the position was determined by the address or phone number listed.

8. Degree Required: the educational requirements listed in the job announcement – none mentioned, degree mentioned or specifically implied, degree specifically in recreation, tourism, or hospitality.

9. Number of Positions: the number of positions listed in the
    announcement - a specific number was usually given, but in
    cases where a plural position title was listed ("tour guides"),
    it was conservatively assumed that this meant only two or
    three positions, depending upon the size of the company.

After coding and entering the data, basic descriptive statistics were
developed using the SPSS-PC package. These findings are reported in the
next section.

RESULTS

A total of 433 commercial recreation and tourism job announcements were
included in the content analysis. These announcements covered
approximately 553 individual positions. Most (87.8%) of the
announcements were for in-state locations. There seemed to be a fairly
consistent number of announcements throughout the year except for the
three week period around Christmas, when only eleven job announcements
appeared. August through October represented the three month high
period, when 35% of all announcements occurred.

As indicated in Table 1, the hotel industry dominated the job market.
There was however, an impressive number of secondary employers,
representing a wide spectrum of industries. Table 2 shows the 73
position titles that were found in the study. Again, the list is
dominated by hotel positions. Notice also that there are many
"pre-professional" positions near the top of the list (front desk clerk,
retail sales staff, reservationist, time share sales). Table 3 indicates
the "key words" under which the positions were advertised. It should be
noted that 72% of all the announcements were listed under just three key
words: hotel, sales, and manager (or management).

Professional Levels of the positions are listed in Table 4. As
indicated, the largest category was for the "pre-professional". This was
followed by the "supervisory/management level", but it should be noted
that many of these "managerial" positions were actually for the top
position in a very small enterprise (e.g., small motel, video game
center, ski rental shop). There are many occasions when these positions
are actually filled by recent graduates with some previous experience.

Table 5 indicates the degree requirements listed in the job
announcements. With only 3.5% of the announcements listing a degree
requirement, it must be mentioned that few of the announcements listed
any type of detail about the job duties or requirements. While this
clearly illustrates the open nature of the industry, it is likely that
most of the employers have requirements for education and experience that
were simply not listed.

28

DISCUSSION

The results of this study have immediate value and application for the author's own students. With this information, students can see the tremendous number of full time jobs available and the great diversity of industry settings and position titles. They can also see the oppurtunities for "pre-professional" jobs that provide necessary experience for career advancement upon graduation. Information from the study is now used in counseling new majors and in the department's introductory course. Additionally, and important by-product of this study was a weekly job listing that gained great interest on the department bullitin board.

The importance of this study transcends the basic findings about the job market in one particular locale. Of greater value is the job announcement content analysis system developed for this study. It worked out well and could easily be replicated or adapted. Commercial recreation and tourism educators could set up a similar study in their own community. Much of the work, for example clipping the job announcements, could even be assigned as student projects. However the educator should retain responsibility for content classification and coding since there are ongoing decisions about "professional level", notices to be deleted from consideration, and other matters. These decisions should be made by and experienced person.

Overall, a study of this type can provide an organized overview of the commercial recreation and tourism job market in a given locale. This information will be greatly appreciated by students who seek realistic answers to their questions about career opportunities.

REFERENCES

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6.   R. Weber, Basic Content Analysis, Sage Publications Inc., Beverly Hills, California, 1985.

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TABLE 1
JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS BY TYPE INDUSTRY

Type Industry	Announcements	% Frequency
Hotel/Motel/Resort	250	57.7
Retail Sports	29	6.7
Time Share Resort	14	3.2
Travel Agency	12	2.8
Sports/Fitness Club	11	2.5
Ski Resort (operations)	10	2.3
Movie Theatre	9	2.1
Tour Company	9	2.1
Discount/Incentive Travel	9	2.1
Airlines	9	2.1
Sports Manufacturer	8	1.8
Private Club (nightclub)	7	1.6
Entertainment Center	6	1.4
Bowling Lanes	4	.9
Spa	4	.9
Tour Wholesaler	4	.9
Cruise Lines	4	.9
Theme Park	3	.7
Leisure Theme Restaurant	3	.7
Rec/Sports Publishing Co.	3	.7
Toys/Games/Hobbies Retail	3	.7

Others: 1 or 2 each

Music Retail	Convention Center
Bus Company	Convention Bureau
Auto Rental	Resort Reservation Center
Party Retail	Resort Condo Management
Shopping Mall	Arts & Crafts Retail
Arts & Crafts Manufacturer	Travel Council

TOTALS	433	100.0

TABLE 2
POSITION TITLES

Position Titles	Announcements	% Frequency
Hotel-Front Desk Clerk	84	19.4
Retail Sales Staff	37	8.5
Hotel-Night Auditor	28	6.5
Hotel-Manager	26	6.0
Hotel-Sales Manager	18	4.2
Reservationist	10	2.3
Time Share Sales Staff	10	2.3
Hotel-Front Desk Manager	10	2.3
Hotel-Front Office Manager	10	2.3
Hotel-Housekeeping Supervisor	10	2.3
Manufacturer's Representatives	10	2.3
Sports/Fitness Club Sales	9	2.1
Tour Company Sales Staff	8	1.8
Private Club Manager	7	1.6
Travel Agency Manager	6	1.4
Hotel-Sales Staff	6	1.4
Hotel-Banquet Supervisor	6	1.4
Travel Agency Outside Sales	6	1.4
Hotel-Convention Services Manager	5	1.2
Hotel Concierge	5	1.2
Hotel-Reservations Manager	4	1.0
Hotel-Food & Beverage Manager	4	1.0
Retail Sports Manager	4	1.0
Ski Rental Manager	4	1.0
Tour Guide	4	1.0
Spa Manager	4	1.0
Video Game Center Manager	4	1.0

Others: 1 to 3 each:

Cruise Activity Staff
Movie Theatre Supervisor
Movie Theatre Manager Trainee
Airlines Customer Service
Flight Attendant
Time Share Sales Manager
Hotel-Group Coordinator
Hotel-Guest Services Staff
Hotel-Catering Manager
Hotel Bell Captain
Hotel Rooms Division Manager
Hotel Guest Services Director
Hotel Controller
Hotel Night Manager
Hotel Inspector
Motel Regional Manager

Theme Park Group Sales
Company Travel Coordinator
Special Events Coordinator
Convention Center Sales
Convention Bureau Manager
Travel Council Director
Tour Reservationist
Adventure Travel Sales
Condo Property Manager
Time Share Resort Manager
Ski Area Public Relations
Ski Area Office Manager
Ski Patrol
Ski Marketing Manager
Ski Mountain Operations Mgr
Ski School Director

TABLE 2
CONTINUED
POSITION TITLES

Bowling Lanes Manager   Fitness Center Staff
Water Park Marketing Manager   Sports Advertising Sales
Video Game Center Trainee   Auto Rental Manager
Shopping Mall Promotions Manager   Tennis Pro
Cruise Office Staff   Leisure Theme Restaurant
                                             Manager
Music Retail Manager Supervisor   Children's Rec. Program
                                             Supervisor
Bus Lines Operations Manager

TOTALS   433 100.0

TABLE 3
ANNOUNCEMENT "KEY WORDS"

Key Word	Announcements	% Frequency
Hotel	199	46.0
Sales	68	15.7
Manager/Management	44	10.2
Motel	12	2.8
Travel	11	2.5
Retail	11	2.5
Ski Resort	8	1.8
Reservations	6	1.4
Airlines	6	1.4
Marketing	5	1.2
Resort	5	1.2
Cruise Lines	4	1.0

Others: 1 - 3 times each

Director	Supervisor
Public Relations	Customer Service
Guest Services	General Manager
Assistant	Human Resources
Auditor	Night Auditor
Front Office	Front Desk
Guest Services	Concierge
Desk Clerk	Housekeeping
Tourism	Tour Guide
Spa	Fitness
Theater	Conference
Recreation	Japanese Speaking
Child Care	Bowling
Restaurant	Ski Rental
Head Tennis Pro	Mall Show
Manufacturers Rep	

| TOTAL | 433 | 100.0 |

TABLE 4
PROFESSIONAL LEVEL

Professional Level	Announcements	% Frequency
Supervisory/Management Level	131	30.3
Entry Level Professional	103	23.8
Pre-Professional	199	46.0
TOTALS	433	100.0

TABLE 5
DEGREE REQUIRED

Degree Required	Announcements	% Frequency
No Mention of Degree	418	96.5
Degree Mentioned or Implied	15	3.5
Degree in Recreation, Tourism, or Hospitality Specifically Mentioned	0	0.0
TOTALS	433	100.0