

1983

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Recommended Citation

Howell, Richard (1983) "1982 Smoky Mountains Recreation Consortium: A Synopsis," *Visions in Leisure and Business*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 4 , Article 18.

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1982 SMOKY MOUNTAINS RECREATION CONSORTIUM:
A SYNOPSIS

BY

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ABSTRACT

With the theme, "On the Horizon--Private/Commercial Recreation," the SMRC was held September 10-15 at Camp Montvale, Tennessee. Students and faculty from eleven colleges and universities participated, including Clemson, Ferrum College, Georgia Southern, Indiana, James Madison, Michigan State, Montclair State, South Alabama, Tennessee, Virginia Commonwealth and Virginia Polytechnic Institute. This synopsis was written from tapes and notes compiled by five students: Ruth Lewis and Yahya Hassan of UT, and Catherine Cavis, Joyce Hess and Genie Pannell of Clemson. The SMRC is cosponsored by UT and TVA.

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A SYNOPSIS

Although titled "Overview of Private/Public/Commercial Recreation," the first session led by Gale Trussel and Bob Roark of TVA concentrated on tourism. After a brief history, beginning with 4000 B.C., several trends of the industry were explored, both worldwide and those specific to the Southeast (by 1990, it will lead all other regions in tourism in come generation.) These were followed by TVA's Tourism Development Program operations and services.

Paul Hall, U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration, gave an "Overview of the Travel Industry," beginning with national travel legislation in 1961 and highlighting the evolving role of the federal government in travel promotion and research. Basic travel definitions were covered, and the three major divisions of the tourism establishment were outlined: public, private producers and private distributors. The characteristics of tourism were detailed: rigidity to supply, elasticity of demand, disposable income fluctuations, perishability, fractionated supply and exchangability of product. The session ended with ideas and concepts in travel marketing: market segmentation, share of line, product positioning, diffusion theory and marketing curves.

"Feasibility Studies from Commercial Recreation Facilities" was a succinct presentation by Jan Nichols of Laventhol and Horvath. She detailed the six components of a feasibility study: site and area evaluation, economic environment, supply and demand analysis, attainable

competitive position, recommended facilities, and financial projections. In response to a question, she then summarized the production flow of such a study, from initial client contact through the final report.

In "The Community and Commercial Recreation," Dick Howell of Clemson University first defined the terms "community" and "commercial recreation," as both are rather ambiguous. His personal philosophy on the provision of recreation services and facilities was stated: the private and commercial sectors should supply everything they can, with the public sector "filling the gaps" with services/facilities when scarce or environmentally sensitive resources are involved, or when special client groups or socially desirable activities are being ignored by the private/commercial sectors. Several reasons why private/commercial operations can best provide for the majority of recreational demand in a community were covered, and then both the beneficial and potentially adverse impacts on a community by commercial recreation operations were outlined. A brief look into the future of commercial recreation, based upon current conditions and trends, completed the presentation.

Bob Roark was an outstanding "stand-in" for Carroll Logan on "Prelude to the 1982 World's Fair." Bob gave a brief history of Knoxville's problems and the national energy situation in 1973 which resulted in the decisions which led to the initial planning of a regional energy exposition for the city. He described the later decisions and actions necessary to upgrade the exposition to world's fair status, and the planning and development process required to open on schedule. The audience was told of the plans Knoxville has for the use of the site after the Fair.

Jack Samuels, currently at Montclair State College, covered the first portion of "Market Research for Commercial Recreation Facilities." He targeted his remarks to the student audience, relating the subject to research projects they might face in school in the immediate future. Jack described the motivations for research, considerations in choosing a topic, and then gave some specific ways and places to spot research ideas. Paul Hall addressed the types of research: scientific (secondary/macro/desk); observation/field/survey (questionnaire/face-to-face). Several research techniques were covered: time series analysis, causal, simulation and panel/focus group. Jim Peacock of Peacock Enterprises, completed this session with an in-depth review of marketing research, covering its major functions and use. He detailed his two favorite methods of market research: survey and focal group.

Steve Rogers of Amusement Business captivated the audience during "An Overview of Theme Parks" with information spiced with humorous personal experiences in the industry. Beginning with 17th century pleasure gardens in Europe, his history of theme parks concluded with the two reasons for a virtual halt to new expansion in 1980; market saturation and high construction costs. The definition of a theme park and how it differs from other amusement facilities was discussed. The main revenue sources within a park are: Admission, food and beverage, merchandise, games/rides, and miscellaneous. Of further interest was a detailed explanation for the slowdown in new park construction: leveling of disposable incomes, inflation, demographic shifts, declining mobility (energy costs), changing urban characteristics, security, market maturation/saturation, and increased competition for leisure time activities from video games and other alternatives.

"Promoting and Marketing Attractions" was Jim Peacock's second appearance on the program. The organization of a theme park was presented, to show how marketing fits in as a major division. Three aspects of marketing were discussed: public relations (media relations and publicity), sales (group, tour/travel, industry coupons), and promotions (publicity and sales).

Mike Zirbel of Silver Dollar City discussed "Interfacing the Travel Industry with Major Recreation Attractions." Constraints on travel are threefold: time, financial and physical. The terms "bus," "motorcoach," and "broker" were defined, as were the market segments for motorcoach tours: empty nesters, families, young couples and singles, and senior citizens. Dependence of major attractions on growing motorcoach and package tour segment of the industry was stressed.

"Developing a Prospectus" was delivered by Spencer Boardman, a TVA recreation planner. A prospectus helps get someone's attention; you must recognize that there is competition for new ideas and products; there must be a market for your product. A prospectus is a statement of basic conditions under which a contract can be written, usually requiring research and often a master plan. The writer must be a generalist. Six reasons for potential failure of a recreation enterprise were listed, as well as ten pitfalls to avoid in developing a prospectus.

Dick Howell made another presentation entitled "Training Programs in the Travel Industry." The differences between "training" and "education" were defined, as well as examples of "specialist" and "generalist" positions in the industry. Appropriate institutions for skill and knowledge development were discussed: proprietary, technical, colleges and universities, and on-the-job. The industry has long known its need for specialists (chefs, airline pilots); it is just now recognizing the need for generalists (tourism directors, theme park managers, city tourism planners) whose knowledge base must be more comprehensive than the specialist. Generalists have a harder time landing that first job, and must remain more flexible than specialists to take maximum advantage of the changing job market. Continuing education through workshops and other programs is necessary to keep up with the evolving travel and tourism industry.

"Interfacing Public and Commercial Recreation" was presented by Tommy Lynch of Nashville's Board of Parks and Recreation. Fees and charges already subsidize programs of the National Park Service because tax-based funding is no longer sufficient. Fees also act to limit scarce resource use. Sometimes people actually enjoy facilities more if they have to pay, and it is possible to provide more of the public wants. Feasibility studies are new to public recreation and are excellent guides to new facilities and programs, but be careful they are not just saying what you want to hear.

Rick Doswell of Fairfield Glade, Tennessee discussed "Resort Recreation and Time-Sharing." Golf is "where it's at" in these resort areas. There is also a need for civic centers with many recreation activities and special events. There is a demand separate from the time-sharing and part-time residents. Full-time residents want clubs for such activities as square dancing. Although needs are assessed by using surveys, often better information is gathered by just listening well to what the tenants have to say. Most resorts make their money on lodging and food. Recreation programs enhance the lodging and food operations.

Kitty Frazier, Director of Parks and Recreation in Jonesboro, Tennessee, is a one-person department. How she gets so much done was described in "Promotion and Public Recreation." Over 500 volunteers help, especially in selling the need for recreation programs to a town council with a tight budget. Using tourists is a unique and painless way to provide programs for local citizens at no expense to the town. One example: have a tour broker pay for a local band to put on a public concert enjoyed by motorcoach travelers and residents alike. The band fee is included in the tour package price. Keep local merchants constantly aware of who is responsible for bringing in these tourists; they are more likely then to support your recreation programs in the future with donations and votes on town council.

A one-day field trip to the World's Fair, and another day which included Ogles Water Park in Pigeon Forge, OberGatlinburg Ski Resort, and Silver Dollar City, concluded the consortium.

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