

Public Relations, Marketing, and Customer Service

15

Nila Ipson
Dalhousie University

Laurene Rehman
Dalhousie University

Practitioner Consultant
Dawn Stegen
Recreation Nova Scotia

Marketing is exciting. As a discipline, it provides practical methods of communicating with your customers. Think about how marketing impacts on your own purchasing. Have you ever watched a TV commercial for hamburgers and suddenly felt hungry, or purchased a new iPod because there was a great sale online? How much do you feel marketing has influenced your own decision-making and buying? Marketing can be organized and understood as a series of steps in a marketing/public relations plan. This chapter includes guides, tips, and tools to assist with understanding marketing.

What Is Marketing?

There are many definitions of marketing. The advances in the Internet, media, and technology make one wonder: have these affected the definition of marketing? The most widely accepted definition in Canada and the United Kingdom is one offered by the Chartered Institute of Marketing. According to Sargeant (1999), “marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer requirements profitably” (p. 9). If one were to remove the word “profitably,” or perhaps exchange it for “beneficially,” then this could acceptably define marketing in a public service or nonprofit sector organization.

Leisure services have concentrated on “service quality” since the 1980s (Novatorov & Crompton, 2001). Fried (2005) has defined leisure marketing as “the concept of packaging a product and services in the right way, at the right price, and in the right environment to encourage individuals to buy” (p. 187). The fundamental principle underlying marketing is the understanding of one’s customer orientation, to know what the organization’s target audiences believe, know, or do. This principle allows greater understanding of marketing segments and each segment’s perceived needs, wants, concerns, and behaviors. Marketers identify the target markets they can best affect and satisfy, then establish specific goals and objectives for each

selected target market. They then develop and implement a “marketing plan” for products, programs, or services to appeal to the desired and perceived benefits of each targeted group (Kotler, Roberto, & Lee, 2002). So, has the definition of marketing changed with the proliferation of technology? Kyle (2009) says no. His view is that “changes in [the] competitive environment are numerous. What have also changed are marketing strategies and the marketing programs we have available to implement those strategies. These have changed, but the basic marketing definition has not.”

These definitions have two components that are central to understanding marketing’s role in any organization. Marketing is both a concept and a function. “At a conceptual level, marketing represents a philosophy or approach to management that places the customer right at the center of everything that an organization does. As a function, it may be regarded as the part of the organization that includes, according to Kaczynski and Potwarka (2007), “research, segmentation, product or program development, distribution, pricing, and promotion” (p. 289).

A good example of a park and recreation agency marketing campaign is Take the Roof Off Winter (TTROW), an initiative of Recreation Nova Scotia (see Exhibit 15.1). TTROW is focused on encouraging people to remain active all winter, by getting outside and enjoying the outdoors. It targets all demographics of Nova Scotians and is linked with schools, work places, and community organizations. Interested participants are supported through an Internet site with interesting ideas and information. TTROW functions as partnership among Recreation Nova Scotia (RNS), the Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection, the Recreation Facilities Association of Nova Scotia, Global Television, and Winter Active.

The extent and scope of an organization’s marketing functions depends on its size and mandate. But all park and recreation organizations are engaged in marketing, whether they recognize it or not.

Although components of marketing may be used, the overriding philosophy is often misunderstood.

Exhibit 15.1

Take the Roof Off Winter Marketing Poster



Marketing is not simply selling via advertising. Selling may be one part of an overall marketing effort that focuses on promoting the increase of participation in the organization's services. However, a marketing effort should focus on the needs and desires of the consumer (Cleveland Metroparks, 2000).

In this chapter, the concept of marketing is explored, including what it is and how it can be adapted from the commercial manufacturing industry and applied to further the general objectives of service-based organizations. Typically, marketing literature is presented from a commercial and academic perspective, but in this text the combination of the experience of practitioners with the results of academic research in service marketing is presented in such a manner as to be a reference source for primary users.

Historical Evolution of Marketing

The evolution of marketing has gone through several transitions. These can be considered four eras. The *pro-*

duction era, which involved an insatiable demand for goods and services, came first. There was little need to market or make an appeal to consumers to purchase goods and services. However, since the industrial revolution, advancements in technology have meant that production levels were able to meet the demand, resulting in a need for producers to change their approach. This led to what is referred to as the *sales era*. A marketing philosophy was first introduced during this era. Company sales departments designed strategies to aggressively sell products. Park and recreation organizations found that they, too, needed to focus on meeting the needs of customers. User fees were initiated to help offset the delivery costs of desired programs and to provide new facilities. However, with the socioeconomic concerns of the 1980s, along with the increasing creation of other public service organizations competing in the delivery of programs and services, park and recreation organizations had to become more responsive to customer needs and wants. This led to the *marketing era*. As a result, recreation organizations started to focus on the service delivery components of their operations, and adopt marketing strategies directed toward customer desires.

A further refinement of the marketing approach resulted in the *service marketing era*. This approach has helped park and recreation organizations more accurately define their "business." Parks and recreation is a "service industry." Recreation managers must understand how the marketing of services differs from product marketing. The marketing of services requires consideration of quite different concepts. These characteristic differences are identified by the six characteristics of:

1. intangibility;
2. inseparability;
3. heterogeneity/inconsistency;
4. labor intensity;
5. perishability; and
6. fluctuating demand (O'Sullivan & Spangler, 1998; Berkowitz, Crane, Kerin, Hartley, & Rudelius, 1995).

Intangibility

Services are intangible; that is, they cannot be held, touched, or seen before the decision to purchase. A product, in contrast, can be inspected, or even tried, before purchasing. Tangible products can be measured objectively on product attributes or features. The quality of service is much more elusive and difficult to measure. Services are experiential in nature and have more evaluative features than do products. For example, friendliness and reliability are difficult to define, much less to evaluate. It is not possible to "kick the tires before pur-

chasing the service” (McCarville, 2002, p. 3). Customers evaluate service quality on many more dimensions than tangible products, including reliability, responsiveness, communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding of or knowing the customer, and access to such tangibles as facilities and equipment. With a service, the customer has no way of verifying the claims of the marketing message until the service has actually been purchased and experienced.

Inseparability

Services typically cannot be separated from the creator or provider of the service. The person rendering the service requires the customer to be present throughout the service delivery—thus, the service is produced and consumed at the same time and at the same site. This normally occurs in the organization’s facility. People—whether staff or other customers—are as much a part of the product (program/service) in the customer’s mind as any other attribute of that service. So are the physical surroundings of the facility. For example, a person may attend a leisure instruction course at a local multipurpose recreation center. The quality of the instruction may be exceptionally high, but if the customer/client has difficulty parking, finds the registration process unsatisfactory or difficult to access, or is seated next to a rude participant, then he or she may not be satisfied with the learning experience because the expected benefits were not met. This individual will be reluctant to return and may complain to others.

Heterogeneity/Inconsistency

The marketing of services is challenging, because the quality of service is often inconsistent. It is impossible for a service industry to standardize its outputs, services, and experiences to guarantee quality. The quality of service varies, depending on where and when it is performed, and the quality and consistency of the service depends greatly on the service provider. At its core, service marketing is people working with people. The service provider performance or the quality of the service cannot be evaluated until after it has been delivered, nor can it undergo a quality inspection before it is delivered. Attention to service/experience quality must, therefore, be continuous.

Labor Intensity

Services and many recreation experiences are also very labor intensive and the quality of service, from the customer’s perspective, depends on the quality of their interactions with employees. To many park and recreation customers, the programmers, instructors, interpreters, and rangers, etc., are the service. Given the importance of employee-customer interactions, service quality and consistency are largely determined by the

quality of many temporary relationships between customers and employees. If a service person gets something wrong, it is likely to erase from the mind of the customer all the memories of good treatment he or she received up until that time. But, if an employee gets it right, there is a chance to undo all the wrongs that may have been perceived before.

Perishability

Tangible goods can be produced and then placed in inventory, so they are available when and where customers want them. Services, on the other hand, are highly perishable: they cannot be inventoried during periods of low use and stored for future use. A campsite not used or a program not filled is an opportunity lost forever; the lost revenue cannot be recovered, regardless of how good the remainder of the season is. Unused facility time, empty seats in a stadium, or idle staff at a facility all represent business that is lost forever. If services are not utilized at the time of production, they are not recoverable. Marketers, therefore, have a complex responsibility to promote and inform, to ensure that their services remain as optimally utilized as possible.

Fluctuating Demand

The market for park and recreation services fluctuates considerably by season, day of the week, and hour of the day. Ski lifts often lie idle all summer, and golf courses (in snow areas) often go unused in the winter. The combination of perishability and fluctuating demand results in programming, planning, pricing, and promotion challenges to the service manager. Some organizations have creatively developed uses for idle facility capacity during off seasons (such as golf courses being used for cross-country skiing in winter). Creative marketing strategies, advertising, and variable pricing are used to stimulate demand during slack periods (i.e., offering family packages and lower prices during non-prime times, etc.). Strategies for reducing peaking (irregular demand) should be major components in recreation marketing strategies. The marketing task of trying to smooth irregular demand fluctuations is called *synchromarketing*. Marketing strategies can also be developed to redirect visitation away from over-utilized facilities and areas to ones that have excess capacity. This is referred to as “*demarketing*,” and is often done with campsites and picnic areas.

The bottom line in service marketing is: when clients use a service they buy only a promise that the organization will deliver what it says it will deliver. The challenge is to market the promised “benefit,” so it is tangible to the clientele, and to deliver on that promise consistently. It is the responsibility of every employee

Exhibit 15.2

Old and New Practices in Marketing

| Previous Practice | New Practice |
|---|---|
| Marketing done by marketing staff | Marketing done by everyone |
| Organizing around a set of products | Organizing around customer segments; may lead to a matrix organization |
| Selling a standard product | Preparing a segmented or customized offerings, as Dell computer does |
| Building your brand through advertising | Building your brand through positive member experiences and integrated marketing communications |
| Focusing on attracting members | Focusing on retention, satisfaction, and delight of members |

who serves and interacts with customers, as well as the managers who support front-line employees, to strive to ensure that quality service is provided.

Today, there is an emphasis on:

- service and experience-relevant approaches to marketing;
- directing marketing at priority stakeholders (e.g., park users, volunteers, sponsors, contributors), not just facility and program customers;
- longer-term marketing focused on developing and enhancing relationships with target markets and priority stakeholders;
- marketing communications that encourage and support dialogue and bonding with stakeholders, or work toward forming partnerships in the delivering of services;
- strategic marketing that contributes to implementing organizational missions and strategic objectives based on perceived benefits of recreation and leisure experiences;
- value-added quality;
- integration and focus of different elements of marketing (e.g., pricing, communications) in a way that supports overall marketing objectives;
- customer (e.g., park users, volunteers, sponsors, contributors) retention and customer loyalty;
- knowledge/information-based targeting and communications;
- marketing as a responsibility and function of staff throughout the organization and not just the marketing or public relations departments; and
- cooperative marketing.

Kotler (2005, p. 19) has identified five key trends for marketing practice today, and compared these trends with previous practices (see Exhibit 15.2).

Social/Behavioral Change and Experience Marketing

Two newer forms of marketing increasingly used are *social/behavioral change marketing* and *experience marketing*. Parallel to the service marketing focus is that of social or behavioral change marketing. Kotler, Roberto, and Lee (2002) offer the following definition of social marketing: "Social marketing is the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify, or abandon a behavior for the benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole" (p. 5). This type of marketing has evolved in the fields of sociology, health, and medicine, where the marketing process is used to sell behavior change, for example, smoking cessation, recycling, and improved nutrition. Recreation organizations apply social marketing when trying to influence behavioral change in participants: increasing fitness levels, environmental preservation, participation safety, and risk management, etc.

A parallel marketing focus that has emerged is that of *experience marketing*. O'Sullivan and Spangler (1998) have coined this term to refer to the fact that:

Most segments of the service industry include an element of an experience within its component. . . . An experience is quite different from purchasing a product or arranging for a service. The level of involvement, as well as the emphasis on personal needs, differentiates an experience from other segments of the economy. This difference is due in part to the individualized involvement, reaction, and response to an experience (pp. 1–3).

People no longer simply enroll in or attend programs. They want to be part of the program, and expect more from it than has traditionally been desired. For

example, a shopping trip to a mall has become a mini-vacation, complete with palm trees, waterfalls, music, indoor beaches and swimming, entertainment centers, live animals, etc. The local bookstore has become a gathering place, where friends meet. Experience marketing examines ways to infuse, enhance, or create experiences within programs, facilities, and services, as well as to find other methods of promoting individual growth and well-being for participants and the community. The following section shows examples of emerging approaches to recreation experience marketing.

New Perspectives in Park and Recreation Marketing

The beginning of a new millennium has focused our attention on the future and the importance of keeping up to date with the newest ideas that will shape society. The world is constantly changing. An organization's marketing philosophy should both identify where efforts and resources need to be directed, and what ideas and demographic patterns are impacting citizens' lives at the present, thus driving the future of park and recreation programming and management.

Exhibit 15.3 discusses a unique marketing program, directed at Canadian youth, and aimed at behavioral change that increases youth fitness.

Designing programs and marketing them to the masses was once considered the norm. Being all things to all people (presumably who shared common interests and desires) was the major thrust of park and recreation programs and services. Today, society continues to be segmented into many smaller sub-groupings based on household composition, demographic patterns, lifestyle and leisure choices, shopping patterns, employment, media choices, outcome benefits, and other factors. People today want more than just an activity in which they can participate; they want a lifestyle experience, one that is interesting, memorable, and unique to their individual tastes. Recreation offerings are no longer just a game, a fair, a concert, or a trade show. Events today are a conglomeration of a variety of activities. Entertainment, events, education, and sports are converging, as people come to expect more and more from their leisure experiences (Allen, 2001). People are seeking desire fulfillment, memories, traditions, a release from busy lives, spiritual intuitiveness, and connection not only with others, but also with the natural world.

The concepts of *convergence marketing*, *cooperative marketing partnerships*, *cause-related marketing*, *online outreach*, and *database marketing* are additional new perspectives that are serving to reshape and define the role of marketing and public relations within today's park and recreation service sector.

Exhibit 15.3

Keeping Up with the Times: A Case Study of the SoGo Active Youth Initiative



The SoGo Active youth initiative is a program sponsored by Coca-Cola Canada and other organizations, to encourage youth to become more physically active through peer support and pressure. The sponsors of this exciting youth-oriented marketing campaign describe its goals as follows:

"Sogo Active has been called 'the sickest way to live healthy.' Presented by Coca-Cola Canada, in collaboration with ParticipACTION, Sogo Active is unlike any other youth initiative, because it gives young Canadians the tools to design and control their own get active plans. Its unique approach for inspiring 'for youth by youth' group activity draws on the power of peers reaching out to less active peers, promotes developing leadership skills, and facilitates breaking down barriers to active living. We want young Canadians to be the most active youth in the world. So, to get started off on the right foot, Coca-Cola is thrilled to give Sogo Active participants the chance to carry the Olympic Flame in the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Torch Relay. To ensure that each province and territory is represented, there are 1,000 torchbearer spots available to be earned from across the country. But Sogo Active won't end there. We want to make sure the campaign makes a difference. We hope to build ownership and leadership within youth groups and communities so they can carry on under their own power. And we want today's youth to become tomorrow's coaches, volunteers, and staff. That's why the program is being extended until 2012" (SoGo Active, 2009).

Convergence Marketing

Today's knowledge-based society is increasingly seeking experiences in which fun and learning can be combined. They want experiences that spend their time well, even more so than their money. In many instances, they are seeking transformational experiences, from which they leave as changed individuals. They are seeking experiences that engage them in an inherently personal way. The concept is known as *convergence—the development of new models of leisure experiences that combine leisure and learning with other mediums of involvement or entertainment*. Examples of convergence are being marketed using such terms as *edutainment*, *shoppertainment*, *agri-tainment*, and *eatertainment*. These have all become leading methods of marketing an organization or experience venture to create greater awareness, participation, and even revenue outcomes (White, 2001).

Edutainment. Many recreation and leisure clubs are adding separate children's entertainment and play, or edutainment, areas to broaden their facilities' appeal, increase the value to their existing offerings as a way of attracting new customers, and increase their revenues through educational opportunities. For example, a children's spring camp may combine sports along with learning opportunities at the local library (such as reading or theatre programs). This additional learning opportunity broadens the scope of the camp, and provides more value to the camp.

Shoppertainment. Today, shopping centers, malls, and retailers are finding that to stay competitive and attract customers, they must incorporate entertainment and unique experiences in their mix and facilities. Amusement park facilities offered within shopping malls are a perfect example, and this approach is used by the Mall of America in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the West Edmonton Mall in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Each of these malls combines skating, swimming, and other recreation with shopping. A second method of providing entertainment at shopping malls is the staging of special events, not just sales. Providing fashion shows, a visit to the Easter Bunny, or a talk with Santa Claus—and even providing a pianist in the food court—are all ways of adding to the reason to come to the mall.

Eatertainment. In the mid 1980s, quick service restaurants began adding soft, contained play units to the outside of their restaurants and saw sales increase dramatically, spurring a major trend of adding play areas to restaurants. For some restaurants, food has almost become secondary to entertainment, and eating has become an interactive experience, such as in the case of theme restaurants and dinner theaters (White, 2001).

Agri-tainment. The economic existence of many family farms is being threatened by the shrinking traditional farm economy. These farmers are applying convergence strategies by combining the unique nostalgic, rural and outdoor appeal of a working farm environment with leisure and entertainment experience. This creates such attractions as pick-your-own orchards, petting zoos, hay rides, corn field mazes, school field trips to farms, and unique rural eating destinations. Such events become marketing strategies in and of themselves (White, 2001).

Cooperative Marketing Partnerships

Each of the above convergence examples also demonstrates the successful combining of resources. As park and recreation budgets shrink or stagnate, and the number of quality service options increases, the concept of partnership emerges as a favorable way to maintain or broaden day-to-day operations. Many park and recreation agencies have fostered a form of partnership, by seeking event sponsorship or corporate support in return for tangible benefits to the company. Some, however, hesitate to pursue these funding opportunities, as they are afraid they will turn their parks and facilities into corporate billboards. This does not, however, have to be the case. For example, the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation (OTMPC) combines the efforts of business and public park and recreation agencies to promote park and recreation participation with a cooperative marketing approach. OTMPC hosts an Internet site for "industry partners [that serves as a] valuable source of tourism news, marketing opportunities, research, and resources. The OTMPC collaborates with tourism partners and colleagues at home and internationally to develop and deliver exciting, integrated, research-driven marketing programs that reinforce Ontario as a strong tourism economy and a premier, four-season travel destination. [It serves as a] unique and exciting private/public sector partnership!" (Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership, 2009).

Cooperative marketing partnerships are one of the fastest growing alternative funding methods being used by municipal park and recreation agencies. *Cooperative marketing partnership* is defined as partnering an entire park and recreation organization with a company that does business in the local area. This approach is highlighted by the SoGoActive initiative and the Take the Roof Off Winter campaigns discussed above. When facilities and events are bundled together into one package, the opportunity becomes more attractive. For example, Aurora CO hosts two major free special events each year in which corporate sponsors play an important role. KidSpree, an outdoor two-day festival for kids, is held each July, and brings in more than 30,000

children and adults. PumpkinFest, held each October, also attracts large crowds. National corporate sponsors include Pepsi, McDonald's, and J.C. Penney; local sponsors include the Medical Center of Aurora, the Colorado Lottery, and the Colorado Building Construction and Trade Council. Local media publicize the events to increase attendance.

The benefit of such marketing strategies is that there is less work. Instead of looking for sponsors for each event or program, a single marketing partnership can financially support all events. Involving the marketing and public relations department in establishing such partnerships will help to ensure that these exclusive associations are jointly developed. Companies are willing to pay a premium for such partnerships, thus providing greater advantages than a traditional event sponsorship (Jackowski, 2000). These partnerships result in greater value and improved services for customers.

Cause-Related Marketing

Cause-related marketing is a means of getting one's marketing message to the people at the grassroots level by showing support to a particular cause or issue. Linking an organization, company, brand, or product to a social cause or issue is not a new concept, but the use of the cause-related marketing strategy has increased dramatically in the past decade. Companies, as well as public and nonprofit organizations, use cause-related marketing to build long-lasting, deep relationships with customers. This marketing approach allows organizations to illustrate their commitment to community service, as well as to develop the commitment of participants to the organization. For example, many organizations have hosted events to raise money for breast cancer research. The linking of the recreation organization with breast cancer research allows participants to feel good they are supporting an important cause or issue. For further explanation on cause-related marketing and its relations to social marketing, see O'Sullivan and Spangler (1998).

Online Community Outreach, Database, and E-Marketing

The Internet marketplace is forcing many organizations to integrate their communication efforts. A variety of markets can be reached online. For example, producing an Internet site that simply displays persuasive information is not enough. The site must create a positive give-and-take experience for the person who comes to the site, and to do it in such an informative and engaging way that the person wants to come back. This is the "high tech" with a "high touch" concept. In cyberspace, it is not the one-time exposure that counts, but the repeat business. Successful sites establish rela-

tionships by providing useful, timely information. This means updating sites regularly. People like Internet sites when they discover that they will find new information each time they visit. Thus, a successful Internet site is designed with *customer relationship management* (CRM) (Pride, Ferrell, Blotnicky, & Grant, 2009) in mind. CRM "focuses on using information about customers to create marketing strategies that develop and sustain desirable long-term customer relationships" (p. 241). People come to Internet sites for information, to send complaints or suggestions, and to register—to give and take information. For an outside organization to successfully create an Internet site, it must work closely with the customer to integrate the various communication efforts; for example, integrating customer relations, marketing, employee relations, advertising, media relations, government affairs, investor relations, human resources and personnel, among others.

The technology of the Internet has made it possible to bring personal service and marketing information to nearly every household, and even to potential customers outside of the home, such as those who own and use mobile telephones with Internet connections. It also provides communication with other businesses. In the park and recreation realm, types of e-marketing include: consumer to consumer, business to consumer, or business to business. Each type of e-marketing shares information either from the business or the consumer. It is important to consider the various options, as most professionals tend to focus solely on business to consumer. E-marketing helps professionals to remember that the consumer is also a vital source of information.

Consumer-to-consumer information posted on the Internet, such as online reviews and polls, is a powerful marketing tool. When deciding whether to buy a membership to a leisure service organization, for example, a consumer may rely more heavily on the opinion of other consumers than advertising that originates from the organization itself. Wikis are another example of *consumer to consumer marketing*. Wikis are Internet sites that are built from the bottom up, that is, through the content contributions of readers. Wikis are becoming a popular way to interface with others. Pride et al. (2009) have noted that the fact that buyers now use "the Internet for comparison shopping has shifted power from the retailer to the consumer" (p. 236).

Recreation providers should carefully consider the legal implications of Internet use (Pride et al., 2009), and the law itself has lagged behind the emergence of new legal and ethical concerns raised by this new technology, so special caution is needed. For example, personal privacy concerns and unsolicited e-mail are two issues to consider. As well, if a decision is made to use a wiki, the provider will need to have someone regularly read and review items that have been added to it.

An Internet site can be used to share information about programs and services, prices, or upcoming events. It can also be a means to collect information from customers such as their needs, desires, interests, concerns, or any other data they would like to share.

Learning to carry out effective polling or survey research and then harnessing the power of database information in the organization's marketing might just be the most important endeavor into which parks and recreation management can invest both their time and money. This is referred to as *database marketing*. CRM uses database marketing as a key component of its strategy. Database marketing incorporates three components:

1. identifying and building a database of current and potential consumers;
2. delivering differential messages according to each consumer's needs and preferences; and
3. tracking customer relationships to monitor the costs of retaining individual customers and the value of their purchases (Pride, Ferrell, Blotnicky, & Grant, 2009, p. 242).

A participant or membership database can provide a wealth of readily available information. Customers must be heard, understood, and nurtured. Effective relationship marketing, based on data research, leads to a higher percentage of satisfied customers, greater customer loyalty, and a perception by customers that they are being offered better quality services. Different types of recreation databases include: membership, registration, enrollment, attendance, guest passes, data from government census on local residents, and participants in school programs that visit the facility.

Relationship marketing is based on discovering customer differences and then adapting marketing strategies to fit the needs of the small unique clusters. Creating and maintaining an up-to-date database can facilitate the identification of customers by such attributes as how frequently or how recently they have participated in one's programs and services. Database information allows management to increase understanding of customer-participation behavior patterns, predict who else might be prospective customers, or create marketing communication opportunities, such as birthdays, anniversaries, etc. Using polling and cross-tabular analysis of the results, one can determine not only what people in general think, but what different sub-groups that have been polled think about specific subjects or issues think. Once public opinion is measured, it can define marketing messages and determine how to best get them across to those individuals who most want to be reached (Penner, 1996).

The Internet can also be used to connect one leisure service organization to another, or to many oth-

ers. Exhibit 15.4 describes the Municipal Information Network, an Internet site that connects agencies in Nova Scotia, Canada.

The use of the Internet for marketing purposes is about connecting humans, not machines! Treat it as such. The potential of Internet marketing is endless. It offers access to information about the organization 24/7 and allows information to cross geographic boundaries.

All Internet sites must be regularly maintained by someone in charge of the owning organization's communications, who has the knowledge and skills to maintain the site with accurate and timely information. Timely and correct information will keep visitors coming back to the site. If the information never changes or is inaccurate, visitors will stop accessing the, and possibly lose interest in the organization's programs and services. Internet discussion groups, local networks, and bulletin boards are becoming an invaluable means of connecting with the community and communicating marketing messages. Recreation administrators can track the responses to their sites, just as they can check the responses to their advertising. This helps an organization plan more strategically for online postings. (Fifteen ways the Internet will prove to be a vital resource for your organization, 1996.)

Benefits Activated Marketing

Today, park and recreation agencies, like most public agencies, are faced with fiscal constraints and are, therefore, looking for ways to attract customers by promoting the benefits of recreation involvement. A popular approach is to increase awareness that "the benefits of recreation are endless." This is known as *benefits activated marketing* (BAM). Rudick and Koslowski have described BAM as "the many ways in which a park and recreation agency can spread the word about the benefits of parks and recreation. Benefits images are key to enhancing public awareness, motivating action. BAM ideas can be either incorporated into an agency's existing marketing plan or can become the foundation for creating a brand new promotional blueprint" (2002).

The BAM movement to make constituents aware of the "benefits" of leisure participation has become a recognizable marketing campaign in and of itself. Utilizing the marketing tools of advertising, publicity, incentives, and personal contacts, managers and marketing personnel now have a myriad of promotional products, slogans, and incentives that are beginning to be widely promoted and used to enhance awareness of parks and recreation offerings and their "endless benefits."

This marketing campaign is an example of how marketing can be used to improve public relations and public awareness. However, it must be remembered

Exhibit 15.4

The Municipal Information Network



MINetwork.org is the Internet site for the Municipal Information Network, a networking and support system that allows municipal recreation professionals working in Nova Scotia to connect and share information with one another. A municipal recreation employee in Nova Scotia can register and be part of MINetwork. This network is similar to NRPA.net or Activeparks.com in the United States. MINetwork is a place for sharing information among Nova Scotia municipal recreation practitioners. It is available free of charge to anyone working in municipal recreation in the province, who registers and completes a MINetwork.org profile. MINetwork.org is a partnership of Recreation Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection, Physical Activity, Sport, and Recreation Program Area. MINetwork.org provides new and experienced recreation professionals working in municipal recreation with a means to interact and support one another. MINetwork is intended for frequent use by municipal recreation professional to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, experience and information" (Recreation Nova Scotia, 2005). (See <http://www.recreationns.ns.ca/minetwork>.)

that the "benefits message" must be based on a total marketing plan that is backed by a solid foundation of research. Research can be done on what people are seeking for benefits from their leisure participation, and also document the value of leisure activities for the individual participant, and the physical, social, environmental, and economic benefits to be gained.

Park and recreation management must be personally informed and ensure that staff members are educated as to the current research findings related to customer needs, concerns, and the physical and psychological benefits being sought from leisure participation. When it comes to trying to sell a local government on the need for funding park and recreation programs, or creating improved facilities and services, recreation professionals must know how to present their case based on strong, well-documented facts and findings. Legislative decision-makers who allocate resources for parks and recreation need valid and reliable information on the benefits, as well as the detrimental consequences of not providing services.

The benefits of leisure are measured in two ways for different purposes. Economists measure recreation and leisure activities for economic efficiency in benefit-costs analysis. The other "measures of benefits" are those viewed as serving to improve desired conditions of individuals, groups, or society. There is an extensive

and rich base of literature on the "economic efficiency" benefits of leisure. Considerably less compiled documentation exists on the so-called "benefits of desirable consequences" (Driver, Brown, & Peterson, 1991). Driver and his colleagues addressed this research gap with their 1991 book, *Benefits of Leisure*, which compiled research findings on the physiological, psychological, sociological, economic, and environmental benefits of leisure.

In 1997, the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA), in conjunction with Parks and Recreation Ontario and RETHINK, Inc., published its *Benefits Catalogue*, listing the benefits of park and recreation activities. It is also an excellent resource, containing references to the research and models that can help agencies better understand the motivations and interests of leisure participants and the desired benefits. The catalogue has a social marketing focus, based on 44 statements structured around eight key benefit outcomes, each supported by evidence-based research. The key statements in the *Benefits Catalogue* are:

1. recreation and active living are essential to personal health and a key determinant of health status;
2. recreation is a key to balanced human development;

3. recreation and parks are essential to quality of life;
4. recreation reduces self-destructive and anti-social behavior;
5. recreation and parks build strong families and healthy communities;
6. pay now or pay more later—recreation reduces health care, social service, and police/justice costs;
7. parks and recreation are significant economic generators in the community; and
8. parks, open spaces and natural areas are essential to ecological survival (p. ix). (See Exhibit 15.5.)

Benefits-driven programs and services have now become a national vision for parks and recreation organizations. For more information, see NRPA's *Benefits-Based Programming Curriculum Manual* (2003). In order to avoid being seen as the providers of a "soft service," and becoming the target of financial cutbacks, park and recreation organizations must know how to articulate the value of their intangibles—such as contributing to the quality of life, developing self-esteem, building leadership skills, and supporting families

(CPRA, pp. vi–viii). Park and recreation professionals will continue to define the future of leisure services, by knowing how to document these benefit outcomes with research, and providing programs and services that deliver the valued benefits. The vast amount of evidence backing the benefit statements should also give professionals confidence to speak out and advocate for the importance of recreation. It also provides park and recreation professionals a common language.

Benefits messages can be used in many marketing strategies:

- to remind park and recreation professionals of the importance of their work;
- to inspire policies, plans, and strategic priorities;
- to bolster the case when looking for program support;
- to build bridges with allied fields and potential community partners;
- to market and promote services that clearly deliver benefits;
- to identify research gaps; and
- to serve as a foundation for program and service evaluation (Benefits in Action, 2000).

Exhibit 15.5

Summary of Benefits Statements

PERSONAL BENEFITS

- 1.1 Physical recreation and fitness contributes to a full and meaningful life.
- 1.2 Regular physical activity is one of the very best methods of health insurance for individuals.
- 1.3 Relaxation, rest and revitalization through the opportunity of leisure is essential to stress management in today's busy and demanding world.
- 1.4 Meaningful leisure activity is an essential source of self-esteem and positive self-image.
- 1.5 Leisure provides the opportunity to lead balanced lives, achieve full potential and gain life satisfaction.
- 1.6 Children's play is essential to the human development process.
- 1.7 Leisure opportunities for youth provide positive lifestyle choices and alternatives to self-destructive behavior.
- 1.8 Parks and open spaces bring beauty to an area while giving people satisfaction and improving their quality of life.

SOCIAL BENEFITS

- 2.1 Leisure provides leadership opportunities that build strong communities.
- 2.2 Community-recreation reduces alienation, loneliness, and anti-social behaviors.
- 2.3 Community recreation promotes ethnic and cultural harmony.
- 2.4 Recreating together builds strong families, the foundation of a stronger society.
- 2.5 Leisure provides opportunities for community involvement, and shared management and ownership of resources.
- 2.6 Integrated and accessible leisure services are critical to the quality of life of people with a disability and disadvantaged individuals.
- 2.7 Leisure opportunities, facilities and the quality of the local environment are the foundations of community pride.
- 2.8 Leisure services enrich and complement protective services, for latchkey children through after-school and other recreational services.

continued

Exhibit 15.5

Summary of Benefits Statements (*continued*)

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- 3.1 Pay now or pay more later! Investment in recreation as a preventive health service makes sense.
- 3.2 A fit work force is a productive work force.
- 3.3 Small investments in recreation yield big economic returns.
- 3.4 Parks and recreation services motivate business relocation and expansion in the community.
- 3.5 Meaningful leisure services reduce the high cost of vandalism and criminal activity.
- 3.6 Recreation and park services are often the catalyst for tourism, a growing sector of the economy.
- 3.7 Investments in environmental protection through the provision of parks and open spaces pay for themselves.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- 4.1 Through the provision of parks, open spaces and protected natural environments, recreation can contribute to the environmental health of the community. This is an essential, life-sustaining role.
- 4.2 The public is often prepared to pay for environmental protection and rehabilitation in their communities, and to support parks and recreation organizations that play a lead role in that protection.
- 4.3 Investing in the environment through parks and the provision of open space in residential areas, leads to an increase in neighborhood property values through accessibility to environmentally friendly green spaces and associated recreation opportunities.
- 4.4 The trend toward natural environment based leisure activities is insurance for a new and improved environmental future.

Source: The Benefits Catalogue, 1997, Canadian Parks & Recreation Association.

Organizations can communicate benefits through a carefully designed and implemented marketing plan based on sound research and marketing strategies. The following section presents the process of developing a strategic marketing plan.

Components of a Marketing Plan

Marketing is implemented in a recreation organization through the development of a marketing plan. The process for preparing a strategic marketing plan includes both management and research functions designed to identify the needs and wants of potential customers, and then encouraging these individuals to exchange their discretionary time and money for recreation programs and services. Strategic market planning seeks to target specific population segments and provide services based on planned outcomes.

The phases of marketing planning are similar to other planning processes (e.g., program, physical resources, information technology, and financial planning)—assessing, planning, implementing, and evaluating. The process of marketing planning need not be intimidating, lengthy, or cumbersome. The marketing plan is a working document—one that defines goals, outlines the actions to be taken, and charts progress. It is a realistic assessment of what services the organiza-

tion is providing, who its customers are (or should be), and how it can best reach the most “profitable” markets. (See Compendium 15-1 for Cleveland Metroparks Marketing Plan.)

Marketing plans—or public relations plans, as they often are called—come in many shapes and sizes. They may be geared toward improving an organization’s identity, promoting a program or service, or repositioning a product or service within a market. How detailed a plan is required depends on the organization’s situation and objectives.

The components of a marketing plan are similar for park and recreation enterprises, nonprofit associations, and public agencies. Four questions should first be answered:

1. where are we now (situational analysis)?
2. where do we want to be (goals and objectives)?
3. how will we get there? (strategies and tactics), and
4. how will we keep on track? (Kotler, et al., 2002; Buchanan, n.d.).

It is important that the following eight marketing components be integrated into the plan:

1. organization’s mission, goals, and objectives;
2. situation assessment;
3. marketing objectives;
4. segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP);

- 5. marketing mix design; and
- 6. marketing budget.

(See Compendium 15-2 for South Carolina Department of Parks Recreation and Tourism sample marketing plan.)

Component 1: Organization's Mission, Goals, and Objectives

Marketing should contribute to achieving the organization's mission, goals and objectives. Thus, the goals and strategic objectives of the marketing plan must recognize and incorporate the organization's mission, goals and objectives; it must translate them into marketing goals and objectives and supportive activities. (See section on organization planning in Chapter 6.)

A marketing plan should establish a hierarchy of objectives originating from and supporting the accomplishment of the organization's strategic objectives and overall organizational marketing objectives. (See Exhibit 15.6 Hierarchy of Marketing Objectives.) The hierarchy consists of marketing mix objectives—program, communication, pricing/accessibility—and objectives to more specifically guide and evaluate individual marketing activities (e.g., a brochure, a special event). Marketing objectives include:

- increasing awareness;
- generating interest and positive dispositions;
- correcting perceptions that have been based on misinformation (e.g., neighborhood parks are not safe);
- informing different markets about new facilities, improvements, or policy changes;
- generating inquiries and requests for information;
- enhancing perceptions of program and facility quality;
- reducing or changing the timing of use/participation; and
- stimulating people to visit, register, volunteer, and contribute.

Some questions that a recreation manager could ask include:

- what do we want to accomplish and how does that relate to mission and strategic objectives? (e.g., increase awareness of opportunities for, and benefits associated with, volunteering and contributing to neighborhood park improvements);
- to which target markets does each objective relate?
- what strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, or threats does each objective address? (e.g., there

is new interest in improving the quality of life in local neighborhoods, ensuring inclusion of participants regardless of ability); and

- how can accomplishment/performance be measured? (e.g., inquiries from civic groups, the numbers of volunteers, monetary contributions).

Objectives should be quantitative and measurable statements of what the organization wants to accomplish over a specified period of time. It is also important that the objectives be reasonable, given the market conditions and the organization's resources. It is better to establish a few reasonable objectives, than a long, unrealistic wish list. As Sargeant (1999) has stated, "objectives are only of value if it is possible to use them as an aid to managing the organization's resources and hence vague terms and needless ambiguity should be studiously avoided" (p. 88). Sargeant identifies the SMART! principles for writing objectives. SMART! objectives should be:

- *specific*—be related to one particular aspect of the marketing activity, rather than several diverse components;
- *measurable*—be achievable within a certain quantifiable period, and have identified outcome criteria;
- *achievable*—be attainable given the organization's finite resources, as opposed to based on "creative thinking on the part of managers";
- *relevant*—each level of the hierarchy of objectives should fit with the previous organizational objectives (see Exhibit 15.6 Hierarchy of Marketing Objectives); and
- *time-scaled*—identify the duration within which the objective will be achieved (p. 89).

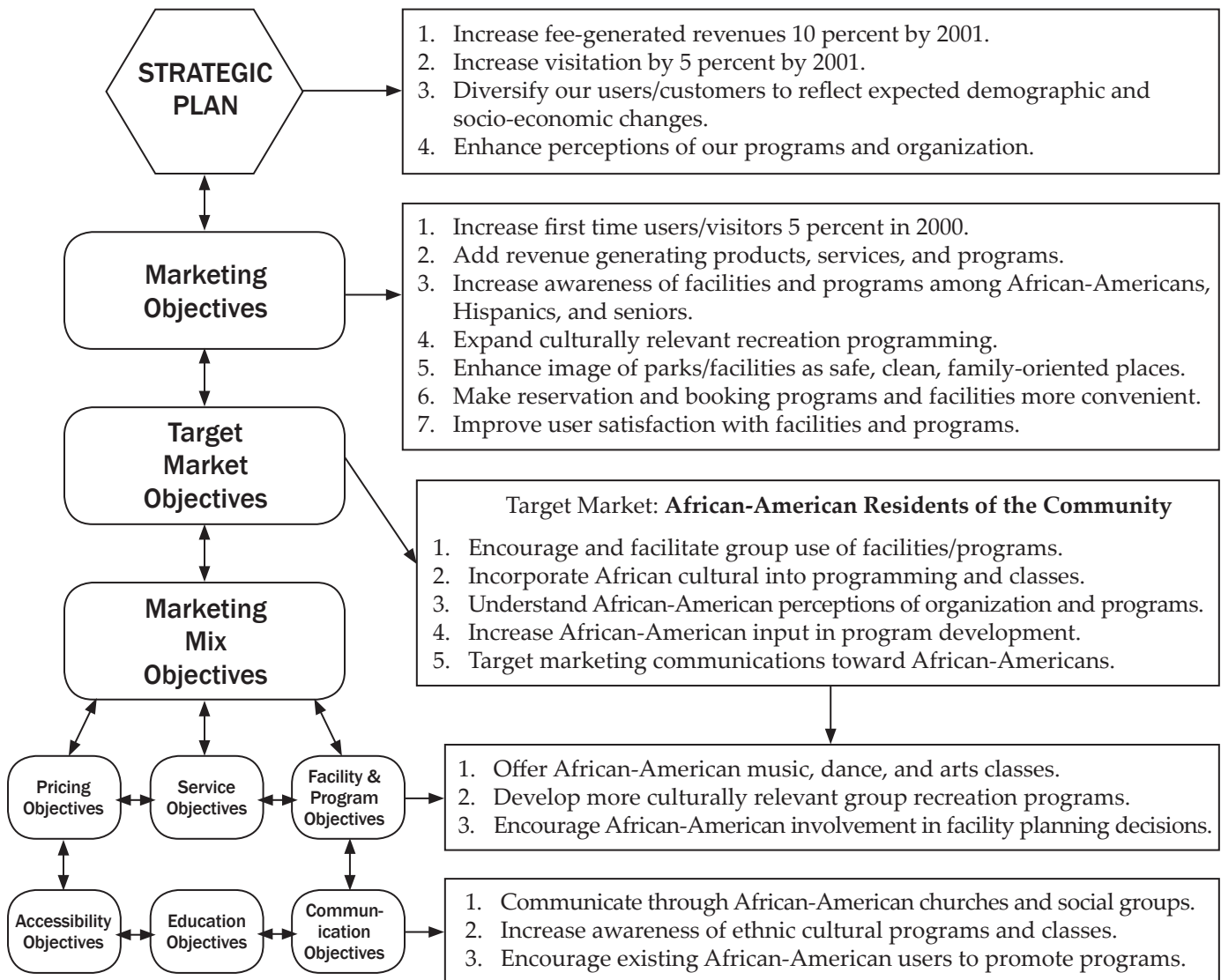
Once the organization has its own goals and objectives established, then the next phase of the marketing plan is to conduct a situation assessment.

Component 2: Situation Assessment

An important function of a marketing plan is to ensure that there is a strategic link between an organization (i.e., its resources, capabilities, limitations) and its emerging environment. A situation assessment is a comprehensive and systematic examination and analysis of both the internal and external factors affecting the organization, its markets, and its marketing activities. There are four dimensions to a marketing situation assessment:

1. external environment analysis;
2. program-facility analysis;
3. marketing audit; and
4. SWOT analysis.

Exhibit 15.6
Hierarchy of Marketing Objectives



External Environment Analysis

An external environmental analysis involves the identification of external factors that the organization does not control, but which influence it, such as social (demographics and lifestyle), economic climate, laws and government actions, technology, and competition. While external factors are strategically important, the organization does not have control over them. However, it is essential to:

- know which factors are strategically important to achieving the mission, goals, and objectives;
- project how these factors are likely to change the future; and

- assess the potential effect of these changes on the organization's future performance (e.g., customer satisfaction, public support, and budget).

This includes an assessment of the potential effect of changes in demographics and lifestyles, economic climate, laws and government actions, technology, and competition on present and future markets. Changes in these factors can create opportunities and problems for achieving an organization's mission and goals and should be taken into account when developing the marketing plan (Wexler, 1997).

Demographics and lifestyles. Changing demographics and lifestyles influence recreation participation and

the adequacy or relevancy of recreation programs and facilities, and thus dictate the marketing strategies of an organization. Some of the changes that may affect recreation considerably are:

- reduced population growth and regional migration movement;
- growth in racial and ethnic minority populations;
- growth in age-friendly communities (e.g., seniors' playgrounds);
- an increase in the number of retired persons with financial ability to recreate and travel;
- better health and wellness to an older age;
- location and accessibility, relative to different geographic markets;
- marketing communication themes and messages;
- inclusion and recognition of the diversity of needs for people with disabilities;
- continued suburbanization and urban sprawl;
- growth in "empty nester" and "sole survivor" households;
- greater involvement of women in professions, politics, and recreation;
- growth in alternative family structures and single parent households;
- decrease in size of families;
- competition for discretionary time; and
- technology and its influence on society towards sedentary lifestyles.

Economic climate. Overall economic conditions significantly influence the short-term and long-term ability of a park and recreation organization to achieve its mission. A marketing strategy that is effective during periods of economic decline and high unemployment may have to be significantly adjusted if the economy experiences an upturn and employment increases. Organizations should monitor and assess the likely effect of changes in economic factors, such as unemployment rates, wage rates and real family income, rate of inflation, and prices of complimentary products (e.g., travel costs, recreation equipment) on their market segments.

Laws and government actions. Laws, court rulings, and actions by federal, state, county, and local governmental agencies all affect park and recreation activities, such as environmental protection, accessibility, employment laws, fundraising, purchasing and contracting, fees and charges, public health and safety, and even the ability to undertake certain types of marketing. Managers must continuously monitor and evaluate the legal environment for implications for markets and marketing strategies.

Technology. The rapid rate of technological development requires organizations to regularly monitor and assess the effect of technology on recreation markets. Communications technologies are changing the ways people receive, process, and react to information. They also influence behaviors, including how customers research and purchase recreation: for example, making reservations over the Internet. Recreation technologies provide new ways for people to satisfy their recreational preferences and have allowed for greater segmentation of recreation markets into smaller "niche" markets. Wii by Nintendo is one example of how recreation organizations have had to add new programs to allow people to participate in the latest technology. Similarly, libraries have added "Mario-kart" tournaments to attract younger markets to the library. Communication, information, and production technologies offer recreation organizations opportunities to reduce costs and improve the quality of their products/services.

Competition. Park and recreation organizations must identify and assess the relative strengths of existing and potential competitors. The analysis of competition should include the competitor's:

- program and facility features and quality;
- target markets serviced; and
- prices.

This information is essential in deciding on how to best position programs and facilities. It can be gathered through visiting these facilities and participating in the programs, asking questions of staff and customers, reviewing brochures and advertisements, and acquiring plans and budgets.

Program and Facility Analysis

The next step consists of a program and facility analysis that involves an internal assessment of the organization's current portfolio of programs, services, and facilities, including unique features and attributes, their current conditions, and needed improvements. Managers need an accurate knowledge and understanding of the organization's existing facilities, programs, and services to develop a marketing plan. They should assess their quality and viability relative to changing customer expectations and the competition. The organization's portfolio (the facilities, programs, and services) should strategically fit with its mission.

Marketing managers should have access to the organization's regularly updated inventory of programs and facilities, which should include:

- type of program and facilities;
- program and facility attributes and features;
- operating costs;

- revenues generated;
- customers (e.g., market segments served);
- customer perceptions and satisfaction (e.g., customer ratings, complaints);
- needed improvements and anticipated cost of these improvements; and
- current program and facility marketing activities.

These inventories can be incorporated into a computer-based spreadsheet to encourage and facilitate regular updates. Current technology also makes it easy to develop and maintain a digital photo gallery of each facility, linked to the organization's Internet site. Although an accurate description of facilities and programs is essential, organizations should also analyze and summarize facility and program information in a way that identifies those that:

- are successful;
- need additional attention, enhancement, and marketing; or
- should be phased out (McDonald, & Payne, 1995).

(See Chapter 8, Recreation Program Planning, and Chapter 9, Program Services and Event Management.)

Marketing Audit

The third step in a situation assessment is a marketing audit. A marketing audit is an internal assessment of the types and effectiveness of the organization's current marketing efforts and capabilities. The audit should result in an inventory of current marketing efforts and activities and an assessment of the organization's ability to develop and implement other types of marketing. A marketing audit determines:

- an organization's current marketing expertise and capabilities;
- how much attention and resources (e.g., staff, budget) are being directed at marketing different programs and facilities;
- the current marketing strategy and objectives;
- amount, type, and quality of the marketing research/information that is available;
- what marketing activities have been implemented and the cost of these activities; and
- measures of whether these activities have been effective.

The information from the marketing audit can:

- indicate whether the organization's marketing has been strategic or hit-or-miss;
- help assess whether various marketing activities should be continued, changed, and/or enhanced;

- determine whether enough attention and resources have been directed at marketing various programs and facilities; and
- identify problems and opportunities for enhancing marketing effectiveness.

The marketing audit helps ensure that the organization develops a marketing strategy that is realistic and achievable (Kotlar & Armstrong, 1991; Swartz, Browen, & Brown, 1993).

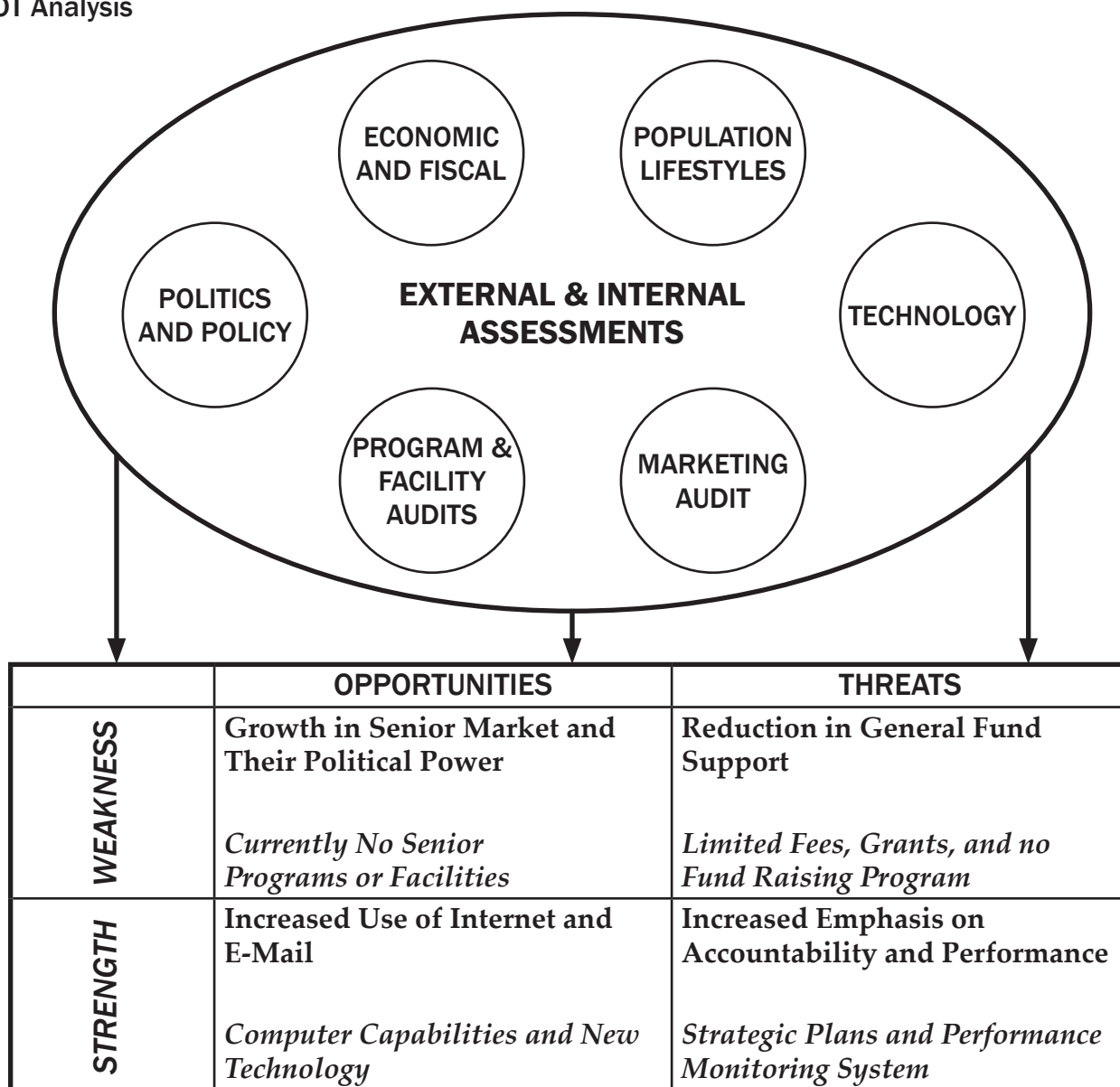
SWOT Analysis

The final step in the situation assessment is the *SWOT analysis*. The SWOT analysis includes the identification and description of the organization's internal Strengths, Weaknesses, and the external Opportunities, and Threats; it also includes alternative responses and strategies that should be recognized and incorporated as part of the marketing strategy. A SWOT analysis identifies and then compares the organization's internal position (its strengths and weaknesses) with the external environment (opportunities and threats). It provides a structured means of developing marketing ideas within the existing framework for greater effectiveness.

Opportunities are created when some change in the external environment (e.g., a liability immunity law, a growing community concern for quality of life) enhances an organization's ability to achieve its mission and objectives. *Threats* result from a change in the external environment that could impede or prevent an organization from accomplishing its mission and objectives (e.g., new competitors, reductions in federal grant monies). *Weaknesses* are internal limitations (e.g., limited computer or technological capabilities) that could limit the future performance of the organization. *Strength* is a characteristic or capability of the organization that can enhance its overall performance (e.g., staff that are proficient in designing Internet pages, a state-of-the-art reservation system, positive relationships with foundations). Sometimes, organizations find themselves in a negative situation, in which a weakness (e.g., no information or computer technological capabilities) coincides with a threat, (e.g., the competition is successfully advertising and making reservations through the Internet). This requires a strategic response.

The fundamental objective of SWOT analysis is to identify those trends, forces, and conditions that have a potential impact on forming and implementing the organization's marketing strategies. This is an important step for two reasons. First, any change in the external environment can have a profound effect on an organization's markets. By anticipating and taking action, the organization can take advantage of these changes, rather than reacting to them. Second, it provides an opportunity to establish which are the

Exhibit 15.7
SWOT Analysis



most important factors to consider and evaluate. (See Exhibit 15.7 SWOT Analysis and Chapter 7, Planning for Strategic Management.) Sargeant (1999) has asserted that, on completion of its SWOT analysis, an organization should be in the position to develop strategies that maximize the potential offered by the market opportunities, drawing on organizational strengths, while at the same time looking to minimize the likely effects of any weaknesses or perceived threat from the environment. The output from the SWOT analysis should also aid the development of appropriate marketing objectives, since it should be clear at this stage what the most appropriate

means of achieving the organizational objectives will be (McDaniel, & Gates, 1995; Kotler, et al., 2002).

The *PEST assessment* is another approach to assessing an organization that is often used in management. PEST stands for Political, Economical, Social, and Technological. For each of these factors, the community environment is considered for potential impact. An organization may simultaneously use PEST and SWOT analyses, by overlaying the two approaches. For example, during the SWOT analysis, the marketer could also consider what role the political, social, economical, and technological environments may play.

Component 3: Marketing Objectives

Marketing objectives are vital to the success of an organization's marketing effort. They are the primary bridge between the organization's mission and strategic objectives and the marketing function. The marketing objectives, therefore, must be consistent with the overall mission statement and goals of the organization.

Marketing objectives provide the frame of reference for assessing, deciding, and evaluating all marketing activities and should follow the SMART! principles identified above. Marketing objectives guide marketing decisions and identify and set priorities for the relevance and overall contribution of alternative marketing activities to the organization. Marketing objectives should have six characteristics. They should:

1. be realistic and relevant to present and expected future environment, (e.g., increase awareness among minority persons of the organization's programs and facilities, enhance programming and facility features to attract new markets/users);
2. be focused on customer-relevant accomplishments, (e.g., enhance awareness of the diversity of programs and facilities; rather than specific activities, such as producing a programs and parks brochure);
3. be used to capitalize on an organization's strengths and position it for future success and enhance ability to market through the Internet, and develop and market revenue-generating facilities and programs;
4. be realistically achievable within a specific time period;
5. recognize and rectify strategically important organizational weaknesses, (e.g., enhance the quality of interpretive programming provided to customers, offer customers the ability to make online reservations for programs and campgrounds); and
6. be measured and serve as a basis for evaluation and monitoring.

The objectives should be used in three ways. They should:

1. guide the design of marketing mix elements, (e.g. increase revenues from fees and product sales, increase accessibility to programs by single-parent households);
2. help foster internal and external marketing partnerships, (e.g., develop programs that increase use of underutilized parks and facilities, develop packages that encourage tourist use of programs and facilities); and

3. communicate the role and importance of marketing to staff and priority stakeholders, (e.g. develop new markets, increase awareness and provide support, etc.).

Component 4: Marketing Research

Research is the backbone of the marketing planning process. Marketing research provides the information base on which the marketing plan is built and evaluated. Park and recreation organizations need to be more actively involved in marketing research, as it links the participant to the organization. Research can identify problems, concerns, effectiveness. (See Compendium 15-13.)

Benefits of Research

All too often, what customers believe and value differs from what organizations think customers believe and value. In today's fast paced world, current market information is the key to gaining and maintaining leadership in the recreation and leisure market place. Developing and evaluating service improvement programs requires up-to-date information on customer expectations. The benefits of market research include:

- identifying who the customers are;
- determining what the customers want;
- discovering how to reach customers;
- determining how frequently to communicate with them; and
- calculating the return on investment for different marketing strategies.

Frequently, managers and employees of park and recreation organizations:

- do not know what program, facilities, and service features their customers consider important;
- misperceive the relative importance customers assign to different features; and
- do not know how customers rate their performance on important product and service features.

Market research does not have to be costly or complex. It can be as simple as surveying a cross-section of consumers to get their opinions about the programs and services offered, or conducting a telephone or mail survey. However, these research questions do need to be carefully crafted and reviewed by a survey professional to avoid a survey instrument that is hindered by leading, misleading, or undecipherable questions.

Organizations that conduct effective research:

- understand that customer expectations and their competitors' offerings are constantly changing; therefore, they regularly invest the

necessary time and effort to conduct customer research;

- commit to collecting customer information and to act on the findings;
- use a variety of methods, or listening devices, to secure and maintain information about customers' needs, expectations, and perceptions, because they recognize that certain customers prefer not to respond to certain methods (such as questionnaires), and that using more than one method to collect customer information will avoid basing decisions on biased information;
- acknowledge that listening to customers, and reporting what they learn, is every employee's responsibility, not just the responsibility of the marketing and sales staff;
- make it a point to know customers as individuals, not just statistics; their informal face-to-face discussions with customers supplement and confirm the information from comment cards, complaint analysis, or customer surveys; and
- make sure that all employees, regardless of position or responsibility, are provided with information about customer expectations and how they evaluate the organization's products and services.

Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning

The importance of conducting research is readily apparent when an organization tries to understand its customers. To focus the marketing strategy to a specific target group, clear information is needed about those participants. Therefore, it is important to understand the *segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP)* approach to marketing.

It is a mistake to attempt to be all things to all markets and publics. It is difficult and risky to design marketing strategies for the mass market. Marketing strategies designed for the "average" customer or program visitor often result in programs, facilities, prices, and communication that are not very appealing or compelling. For example, there is a hot debate right now between all-terrain vehicle (ATV) users and hikers regarding trail use. ATV users have different needs and interests in the use of trails from hikers; this divergence of needs has led to strong arguments for development of trails to support each groups' needs (See Exhibit 15.8 Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning Process).

Segmenting existing and potential markets, selecting target markets and priority stakeholders, and developing a positioning strategy is the essence of a strategic marketing plan. According to the STP process, the effectiveness and efficiency of park and recreation marketing depends on whether organizations accomplish the following three types of analysis:

1. identify and focus on mission-appropriate markets that they have the best chance of satisfying (segmenting);
2. design their marketing mixes to recognize and address the needs and expectations of designated target markets (targeting); and
3. differentiate or position their programs, facilities, and services that are most important to their target markets and priority stakeholders (positioning).

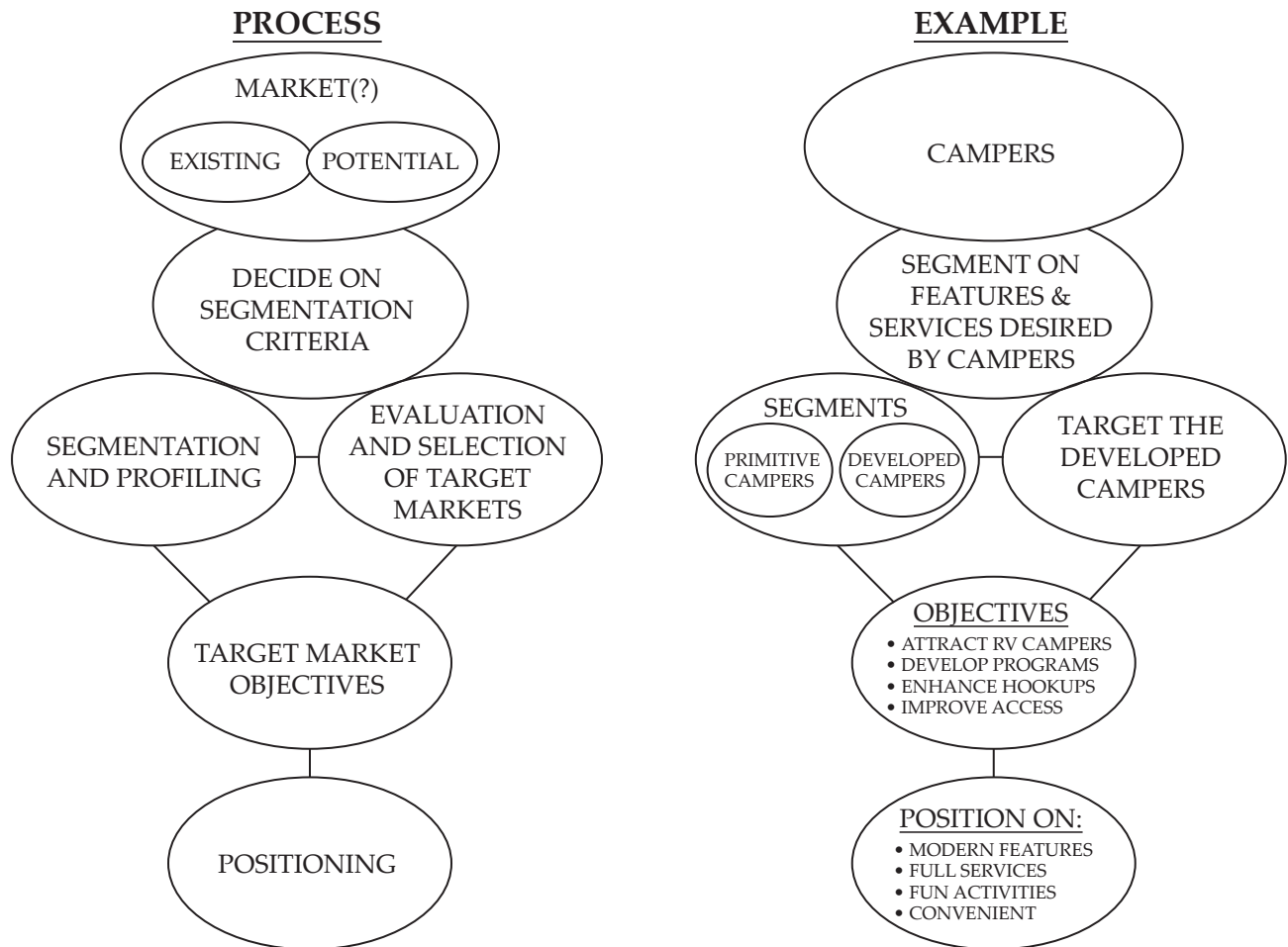
Segmenting. When markets are too diverse (e.g., preferences, willingness to pay, responsiveness to various marketing communications) to handle as a homogeneous entity, they should be segmented. Effective market segmentation divides an overall market into segments that have similar sensitivities and likely responses to elements of the marketing mix, and differ in important ways from people comprising other segments. This helps organizations target market segments and prepare a distinctive marketing mix. Market segmentation helps prevent the waste of valuable resources by directing effort into those areas that will best help achieve success. Successful market segmentation involves understanding customer attitudes, customer preferences, and benefits sought. This allows managers to determine relevant features and requirements and to use them as a source of program and facility differentiation/positioning (Pride et al., 2009).

For instance, an organization may need to publicize a new children's program or service at a community center. It may select appropriate zip codes or define neighborhood boundaries (geographic segmentation), followed by households that have children in the ages being served (stage of family life-cycle segmentation). It may further segment into families that have participated in a program at the center before and those that have not (usage rate/status segmentation). Each of these markets (e.g., families within the geographic boundary, families that have participated before, and families that have not participated before) are a market segment and may require a different marketing approach.

The use of market segmentation based on benefits, behaviors, and psychological variables can have a significant effect on park, recreation, and leisure service delivery. Organizations can match the desired outcomes or perceived benefits of their clientele with the documented social, emotional, economic, and environmental benefits supported by the research of recreation programs and services. (See Chapter 8, Recreation Program Planning, and Chapter 9, Program Services and Event Management.)

Park and recreation markets, including existing and potential customers, can be segmented using one or more market descriptors:

Exhibit 15.8
Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning Process



- leisure needs and interests;
- geographic location;
- socio-demographics and lifestyle;
- program and facility use status or usage rate;
- loyalty to a program, facility, or organization;
- benefits sought in the recreational experiences;
- value placed on program and facility attributes and features;
- recreation equipment used, (e.g., sailboats vs. jet skis); and
- time customers can and do take advantage of leisure activities.

Managers can use these descriptors to profile and describe target markets, creating a customer typology. The typology expedites enhanced understanding and subsequent identification of appropriate subgroups for which potential marketing efforts can be focused.

Market segments must also be profiled and analyzed. The profiling should collect the following data about individuals comprising different segments:

- who are they (age, income, family status, potential users, and long-time users);
- what benefits and features they consider most important when evaluating facilities or programs;
- their current perceptions of different programs or facilities;
- when they recreate or use facilities — weekdays, weekday nights, weekends;
- the most effective ways of communicating with them (e.g., newspaper, Internet, calendar of events, newsletters, large print brochures, or alternative communication systems, such as cassette tapes); and
- how much are they able or willing to pay for a facility or program?

To be useful, the segments must be measurable, accessible, and substantial. *Measurability* refers to how easily the manager is able to ascertain the size of the potential target groups, as well as information related to amount of discretionary time and money individuals may have, or other related information of importance. *Accessibility* is determined by location, timing, attractiveness, and affordability. The organization must be able to contact and communicate effectively with the potential market. The segment must be *substantial*, that is, large enough to make a venture worthwhile, to warrant separate attention, and to generate economic profitability for a commercial venture.

Targeting. The next step is to decide which segments the organization wants to attract or serve. These segments are referred to as target markets. Managers should evaluate segments to determine which offer the greatest opportunity. The assessment criteria could include:

- need;
- existing and future visitation potential of each segment;
- amount and strength of competition within each segment;
- organization's ability to design and offer a marketing mix that will be successful in satisfying different segments;
- cost of servicing different segments; and
- whether, and how much, serving different segments will contribute to the accomplishment of the organization's mission and strategic objectives.

The objective is to design and implement a marketing plan to develop and promote specific programs and services to meet the needs, wants, and interests of each targeted market. Not all people want the same things. The manager or marketer must be sensitive to people's changing attitudes, values, and wants, and recognize that within a market there will be groups or segments of people who will benefit more from the organization's services than others. Any one organization with limited resources cannot hope to satisfy everyone's needs; therefore, it should strive to narrow the focus to the most homogeneous group possible to ensure greater potential of success in reaching the targeted market group.

Managers should establish objectives for each target market (see Exhibit 15.6). These objectives serve a number of functions, including:

- guidance for developing marketing mixes for different target markets;
- information for allocating the marketing budget between targeted markets;

- a basis for objectively evaluating the effectiveness of the marketing mixes developed for the different target markets; and
- a framework for integrating the different marketing mixes into an overall marketing strategy.

Positioning. The next step in the STP process is to decide how the organization can most effectively differentiate or position its programs and facilities. There are three reasons to differentiate programs, facilities, and even the organization itself on features that are important to target markets and priority stakeholders:

1. because there is growing competition for customers who are searching for programs, facilities, and organizations that best meet their specific needs;
2. because customers evaluate the value of a program or facility by comparing its price/cost, features, and attributes with what is important to them and what the competition is providing; and,
3. because of the need to distinguish programs and facilities on customer-important benefits and features.

Park and recreation organizations must be seriously concerned with how target markets perceive their programs and facilities, relative to the markets' expectations and what competitive facilities and programs are providing. Image (positioning) is built on perceptions; and perceptions are constantly changing, because customer needs and expectations change. The types and quality of facilities and programs supplied by competing providers are also constantly changing. As a consequence, marketing requires managers to monitor how different target markets perceive programs and facilities and determine whether those perceptions are consistent with accomplishing the organization's marketing objectives.

A positioning strategy describes the desired future image/perceptions that an organization wants its target markets to have of its facilities and programs. Effective positioning and image management entails:

- knowing the images different target markets and priority stakeholders have of programs, facilities, and the organization;
- determining whether those images are consistent with the desired/required image or position;
- knowing what contributes most to creating the images and those perceptions;
- developing an awareness and pro-active concern about image among all employees;
- assessing the potential effect of decisions (e.g., programming, policies, fees) on the image and

perceptions of different target markets and priority stakeholders; and

- designing and implementing a marketing mix that enhances the image.

Organizations that are effective marketers develop *positioning maps* that describe:

- program and facility features that are most important to different target markets;
- their current perceptions of their programs or facilities; and,
- the competition's strength and weaknesses on those same features and attributes.

The mapping process (see Exhibit 15.9) includes:

1. identifying other similar or substitute programs and facilities and their strengths and weaknesses on those same features;
2. developing a graphic representation (position map) of the program or facility's current position or image compared to the expected or desired image; and
3. determining ways to change or enhance different elements of the marketing mix to improve the image of the program or facility on those dimensions.

For example, assume that older adults evaluate neighborhood parks on three primary features:

1. passive recreation opportunities;
2. maintenance of the facility and landscape (e.g., gardens, walks); and
3. safety and security.

The positioning map in Exhibit 15.10 is based on survey results that asked questions on users' perceptions of the park experience. It indicates that seniors perceived neighborhood parks to be inadequately maintained, and that they were also concerned about their security and safety while in the parks. Armed with this information, the park and recreation organization is now responsible for determining if there are safety or security problems and how to rectify them (e.g., patrols, lighting). If the organization determines that there are no security problems in the neighborhood parks, then the task is for the management to understand how the seniors developed this perception and identify ways to change the negative perceptions. The seniors also perceived that the parks were not being adequately maintained. The park and recreation organization must now determine the factors that created this perception (e.g., lawns are not mowed enough, paint on buildings is peeling, gardens are not weeded, etc.), and develops

Exhibit 15.9
Preference Map of Four Camping Market Segments

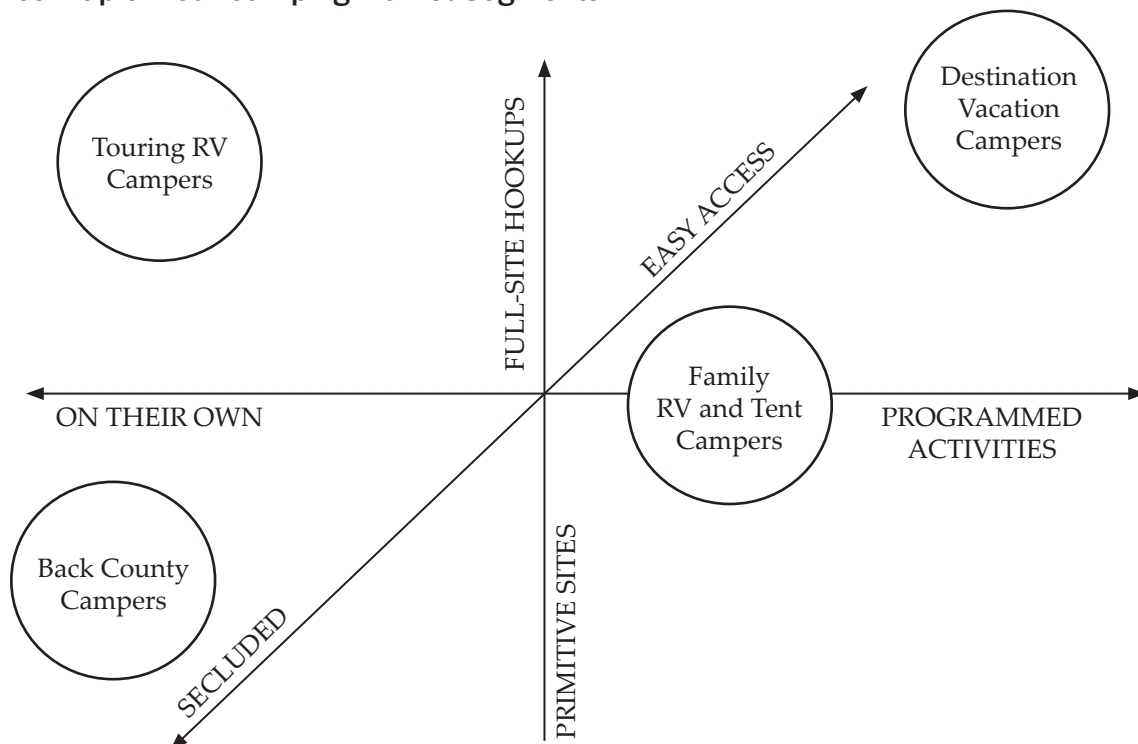
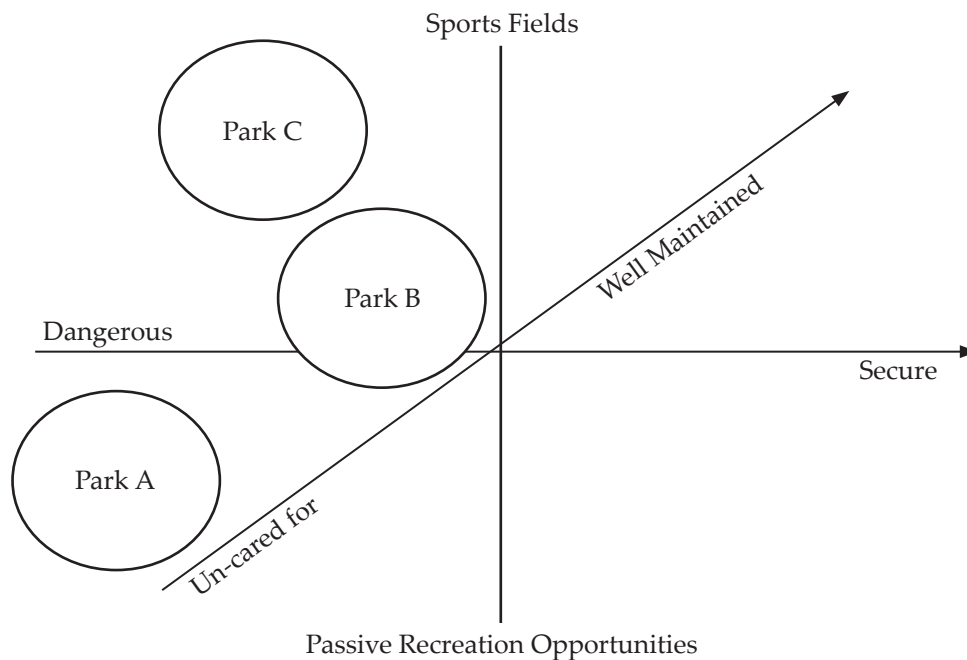


Exhibit 15.10

Senior Market Perceptual Map of Community Parks



maintenance standards to improve the perceptions (see Chapter 13, Management of Operations). The organization might also develop marketing communications (e.g., articles in senior newsletters) that indicate is being done to enhance the neighborhood parks, focusing on maintenance and security enhancements. (See Exhibit 15.11 and Chapter 13, Management of Operations.)

Some tangible methods of gathering research data on target markets are identified in the next section. In order to reach a diverse cross selection of research responses, it is best to use a combination of different data collection methods.

Data Collection Methods

A leading cause of poor quality service by park and recreation organizations is not knowing what the customers expect. Marketing research can elicit information about customers' expectations and perceptions of service. There are several methods of researching customers' needs, expectations, and perceptions, including comments cards, customer surveys, and focus groups.

Comment cards. A large number of organizations rely on comment cards distributed to customers. Comment cards can produce skewed data, because often only people who are either very satisfied or very dissatisfied take the time to complete them. However, they can

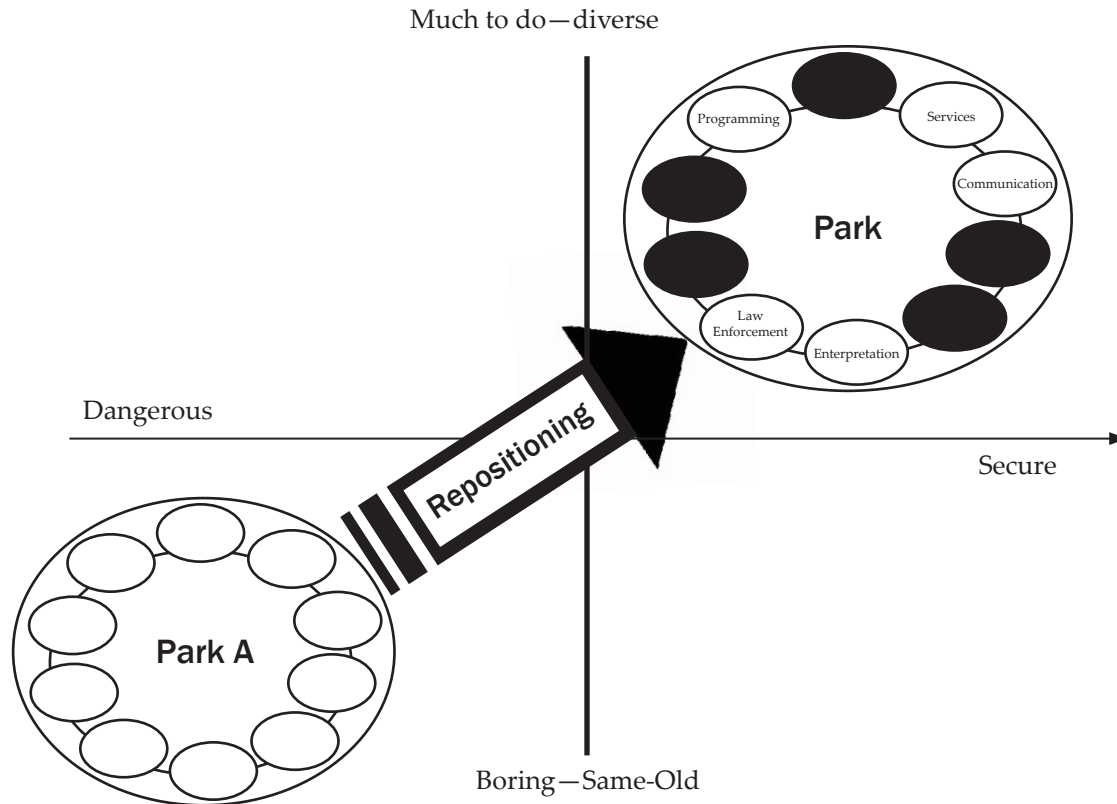
provide useful insights when used with data collected by other methods. For example, the city of Aurora CO distributes survey cards to every recreation participant after the completion of each class or program. Each card is tailored to specific types of programs, such as swimming, youth sports, adults' sports, general recreation classes, etc. By gathering information about the quality of the class, the instructor or coach, the facilities, etc., the recreation department can tailor its programs to meet the needs of its citizens (see Compendium 15-3 for Aurora Customer Comment Cards).

Regular customer surveys. Use of regular customer surveys is continually increasing.

Organizations are constantly providing survey questionnaires to customers and to the general public. Effective surveys use carefully structured questionnaires and are distributed to representative samples of current, former, or prospective customers. Surveys can provide quantitative data to verify information obtained through more informal and qualitative methods such as focus groups. Surveys also allow an organization to explore issues and concerns more analytically and in greater depth than is possible with methods such as comment cards. Surveys can be completed by the customer or administered by trained interviewers via telephone or face-to-face interview. Properly designed and administered surveys can be

Exhibit 15.11

Repositioning of a Neighborhood Park



a relatively quick, inexpensive way of collecting valuable information. (See section on questionnaire development in Chapter 23.)

Focus groups or customer panels. Organizations regularly bring together groups of frequent users to solicit opinions about the quality of service being provided. The validity of the information obtained depends on how well the panel represents the consumer base as a whole. Therefore, careful selection procedures must be used to ensure panels represent the general population of customers to be analyzed.

A moderator leads interactive discussions. For this method to be successful, the organization must:

- decide what information is desired;
- determine the composition of the focus group; and
- establish the skill of the focus group leader.

Focus groups can result in a more comprehensive and meaningful definition of who customers are, how they make decisions, what they really desire in a product or service, and how they feel about specific products and services. Focus groups can also serve as a way for an orga-

nization to pre-test new product and service concepts, and better define questions to be included on larger scale customer surveys and information forms (e.g., registration cards). (See Chapter 23 for more on focus groups.)

Transaction analysis. This type of research normally involves a mail or telephone survey of an individual immediately after a transaction has been completed (i.e., registration, court reservation, inquiry or request for program information, etc.). This type of research enables management to judge current performance, particularly customer's satisfaction with the front-line contact personnel, as well as their overall satisfaction with the total organization's service.

Mystery shoppers. Mystery shopping is a method of auditing the standard of service provision, particularly the organization staff involvement. It attempts to overcome the noncompliance of staff with performance guidelines. The method uses a trained assessor who visits a service agency and reports back their observations of staff performance. Staff must be instructed on the constructive nature and purpose of this research, and management must take care that this process is not

perceived by staff as having an undercover agent sent to spy on them.

Lost-customer research. This type of research involves deliberately seeking customers who have stopped using an organization's services to inquire about their reasons for leaving. This method is similar to exit interviews with employees, in that it asks open-ended, in-depth questions to expose the reasons for defection and the particular events that led to dissatisfaction. The benefit of this type of research is that it identifies failure points and common problems in the service and can help establish an early-warning system for future defectors.

Employee research. Employee research can reveal views about the way services are provided, and perceptions of how services are received by customers. Research into the needs of employees also helps identify policies that may improve their motivation to deliver high quality service. Personal interviews or focus groups are good ways to collect qualitative data. Another means is to hold regular employee meetings to find out what customers are saying and how they are reacting to products, pricing, procedures, and rules.

Secondary data. Universities, industry organizations, government agencies, and commercial research companies regularly collect information that can assist in better understanding customer expectations. Using secondary data is usually less expensive than collecting primary data. The principal disadvantage is that the data usually have not been collected from the organization's customers, or for the organization's specific purposes.

Advances in computer and communication technology, and a growing number of online databases, now make it possible for businesses and other organizations to gain access to the entire collections of libraries, census and zip code data, and the results (and data) of various surveys. Because of the increasing number of Internet and computer-accessible databases, businesses and organizations now have accessible information on market trends, customers, and current research.

Regular informal discussions with customers. Some of the most successful service organizations rely heavily on regular, informal face-to-face discussions with their customers to monitor customer expectations and perceptions. Although these discussions are informal, their approach is usually well-organized and non-random. In many of these organizations, managers are required to make regular face-to-face contact with a certain number of customers each week, month, or quarter.

Observation. Useful insights concerning how customers use and react to products and service can be

gained by observation. Observation does not provide an explanation for customer behavior or reactions, but it can supplement information obtained through other methods. Observation also can generate questions for interviews and surveys. For example, one large resort was confronted with a significant number of customer complaints relating to the availability of information about activities, services, and their locations. By observing its customers, the resort discovered that normal traffic patterns did not bring customers near the resort's main information distribution points. As a result, the locations of the distribution points were changed and complaints decreased substantially.

Perception surveys. Perception surveys combine qualitative and quantitative research methods. The goal is for the organization to understand how customers perceive it. The qualitative component involves researchers interviewing customers (past, present, and future) to determine the attitudes of the clients and the community at large toward the organization. The quantitative method most frequently used, as of late, has been the SERVQUAL: a multiple-item scale of Measuring Consumer Perceptions and Expectations of Service Quality (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990). The SERVQUAL consists of 22 perception items that seek to measure the customers' response to five service quality dimensions: tangibles (appearance of physical elements), reliability (dependability, accurate performance), responsiveness (promptness, helpfulness), assurance (competence, courtesy, credibility, security), and empathy (easy access, good communications, customer understanding). In addition, the survey asks for respondents' evaluation of the relative importance they attach to each of the dimensions of quality. From this, measures of service quality can be calculated, gaps in the services provided can be identified, and the organization can tell whether its customers' expectations are exceeded.

Exceptional service helps retain customers, attracts more customers, and develops an organization reputation that induces customers and prospects alike to do business with the organization in the future. This benefit is achieved by satisfying current customers who then recommend the programs or services to friends, relatives, and acquaintances and who, by their comments, develop and then augment the positive community relations reputation in the marketplace. (See Compendium 15-4 for Cleveland Metroparks Twilight to Midnight Visitor Survey.)

Component 5: Marketing Mix Design

The next step in a marketing plan is designing a mix strategy for each of the different target markets. A *marketing mix* is the bundle of offerings your organi-

zation designs to attract and satisfy customers; it is a package that creates value, utility, and satisfaction for an organization's target markets. The marketing mix is developed from the perspective of the customers, recreation participants, and facility users, taking into account their experiences, perceptions, and evaluations. By developing marketing strategies from the customer's perspective, a marketing manager can design a mix that fits the needs and preferences of various target market clusters, thereby inducing the customer to engage in the programs and services the organization offers.

Traditionally, businesses use the marketing mix paradigm of four variables identified as 4Ps—*product*, *price*, *place*, and *promotion*. However, additional social and service marketing components must also be taken into consideration, including *parameters*, *people*, *peripherals*, and *PerInfo*. These additional Ps provide for greater understanding and consideration of the other factors influencing recreation marketing.

Marketing Mix Variables

Product. The first “P” of the marketing mix, when applied to recreation and service delivery, refers to the programs or services being offered by an organization. Park and recreation organizations traditionally develop and manage a portfolio of various programs, services, and related products (in the manner of facilities and equipment). It is important that this portfolio satisfies current target markets and positions the organization for success in the ability to serve future markets.

Organizations should manage program, services, and facility portfolios—that is, their products—based on how these contribute to achieving strategic objectives. Programs, services, and facilities must contribute to the organization's bottom line, or have the potential to contribute or be discontinued, in the same way that a stock certificate might be sold if the price is declining and the company has long-term earning problems. The emphasis is on current and future performance, rather than on past performance. Existing programs, services, and facilities should compete with proposed new ones for funding and staff time.

Managers need to regularly evaluate each of their programs and services on different criteria, including:

- fit and contribution to the organization's mission;
- operating costs;
- current condition and cost of necessary improvements and renovations;
- customer satisfaction;
- the need and potential growth in the markets they serve;
- ability to generate revenue;
- whether other recreation providers offer similar facilities, services, or programs; and

- the quality of these alternative facilities, services, or programs.

This requires that programs and facilities be evaluated on their product lifecycle stage, potential for sustainability, and competitive advantage. A product that is very mature, with not much potential to generate revenues or satisfy customers, or that is costing a great deal of money to operate, should be discontinued, or possibly renovated or adaptively re-used.

Managers must carefully evaluate the feasibility—financial, political, and technical—of portfolio decisions (e.g., closing a swimming pool, or discontinuing a community theater or a craft workshop). After the decision is made and before it is announced, the organization should develop an appropriate marketing strategy, such as “de-marketing” (if a facility will be closed), cooperative marketing (if a program is to be offered though a partnership arrangement), or a launch strategy (for a new program or facility). While the decision regarding the program, service, and facility offering is more than marketing, marketing can be a strong mechanism for the acceptance of the decision.

Place. In terms of service marketing, *place* refers to such things as facility and location, accessibility, program areas and scheduling. Regarding location, managers should incorporate accessibility into the marketing mix, as most recreation experiences are consumed on the site where they are produced and as they are produced. Park and recreation organizations must design and manage a distribution system that makes their facilities, services, and programs accessible to their target markets. This includes decisions on where they are located, the days and hours of the day they are open/operated, providing directions, and even providing transportation or insuring that participants can get to and from the location. The accessibility of a facility or program is influenced by factors, such as:

- safety and security of the nearby area;
- parking;
- access by different forms of transportation (e.g., automobile, bicycle, public transportation);
- access to buildings and facilities within buildings, (i.e., washrooms, pools, track, telephones, registration desks, etc.);
- accessibility of registration process, i.e., people who use a wheelchair may need special consideration with regard to transportation or time scheduling of registration, etc.;
- proximity to residences and employment locations;
- location of support facilities, (e.g., food service);
- directions; and
- timing/scheduling.

Some organizations have made programs more accessible by outreaching them. For example, a nature center provides exhibits and conducts programs in a local mall or school, or it forms a partnership with a senior citizens community to provide programming in senior housing and provides regular transportation to nearby community centers.

Recreation experiences generally are consumed where they are produced (see section on experience marketing, below.) This means that the facility/area plays a crucial role in determining customer perceptions and satisfaction with a recreation experience. The appearance of a community center, golf course, or park has as much or more to do with a decision to visit or make a repeat visit as any other marketing factor. Given the importance of physical facilities as indicators of quality, the marketer should manipulate these cues to the organization's advantage as part of the message of the marketing mix.

Scheduling concerns include such things as time of day, day of week, season of the year, length of time, and frequency of offerings, etc. When contemplating alternative facility, service, and program locations, organizations should consider distance and accessibility to target markets, modes of travel serving the area, and other attractions and activities that might encourage travel to the area.

Price. Once an organization has conceptualized a program, service, or facility, it must determine what price, if any, to charge. *Pricing should be approached as the interface between marketing and financial objectives.* Price is one of the most visible elements of the marketing mix. It directly influences public perceptions. Inappropriate pricing, both too high and too low, can inhibit the success of a program, service, or facility.

Organizations must balance customers' perception of value, their willingness to pay, and the financial requirements of the facility, service, and program. Although financial figures (e.g., cost, break-even point) are important, price decisions must also incorporate difficult to quantify factors including: customer perceptions of value, relative value compared to substitute facilities and programs, and the customer's reaction to price changes. Too often prices reflect costs, not value to customers. Likewise, there is sometimes a failure to understand the degree of price sensitivity. (See Chapter 19, Financial Management.) There is not a single best price for a facility, program, or for-sale product. Organizations must make pricing decisions as part of their overall marketing and strategic plan. Tips for pricing include:

- establish pricing objectives to guide pricing decisions;
- evaluate the effectiveness of current pricing;

- establish the role of pricing as part of the marketing mix;
- set prices using accurate information on the cost of producing, delivering, and promoting the program, service, or facility;
- recognize that, while some people are price conscious, others place greater emphasis on factors such as quality and convenience; and
- regularly evaluate and adjust prices.

Pricing decisions should achieve organizational objectives and purposes, while recognizing the financial bottom line (e.g., the program must break even in three years, it must generate sufficient net revenue to cover payments on a revenue bond), and requirements for the financial viability of the program, facility, and organization. Pricing must conform to policies, take into account political realities, and be consistent with other elements of the marketing mix.

When setting prices, organizations should answer six questions:

1. what objectives should the pricing strategy accomplish? Pricing objectives can include:
 - encouraging repeat use or more use by current users (penetration pricing) (McCarville, 2002);
 - being regarded as fair by customers and priority stakeholders (e.g., elected officials);
 - re-directing use to non-peak periods;
 - attracting customers away from the competition;
 - avoiding high prices to ensure potential customers are not discouraged (McCarville, 2002);
 - generating enough visitation/registrations at a certain price to break even;
 - recovering development and investment costs in five years; and
 - trying to determine what people will pay, known as skim pricing (McCarville, 2002).
2. what is the perceived value and willingness of target markets to pay (demand) for the facility or program? how does the facility or program compare on attributes and features most important to the target market(s)?
3. what substitute programs and facilities are available, what features and attributes do they provide, and what prices do they charge?
4. what are the direct and indirect costs: is there a loan or a bond that provided financing; is there a required payback (initial development and start-up costs) period; costs should not determine price, but must be incorporated as part of price decisions;

5. what is the breakeven point at alternative prices and sales/visits; what volume of use at different prices will be self-supporting in that fixed and variable costs are covered; and
6. is there a price that matches perceived customer value and still achieves the organizational objectives?

Once these three components of the marketing mix have been established, one seeks to determine how they can best communicate and interpret the message to the various selected target markets via the fourth marketing variable: *promotion*.

Promotion. There is a common misconception that marketing and promotion are the same thing. However, promotion is only one component of the marketing mix. The purpose of promotion, or marketing communication, is to provide target audiences and priority stakeholders—those persons with whom the organization wants and needs to communicate—with accurate and timely information. This information is used to make possible constituents aware of a program, facility, service, or organization and enables them to assess features and advantages relative to alternatives that are available. Promotion is designed to help customers determine whether a program has features and benefits that they consider important and will satisfy their needs/wants, and help them follow through on any decision they reach (e.g., register for a program, reserve a facility, volunteer, make a donation). *The information communicated should be important and practical to the target audience, and it should be accurate.* It can be used for a variety of purposes within the marketing mix, for example, to inform, to persuade, to remind, or to differentiate among services.

The Communication Mix

The promotional element of the marketing mix involves the use of several communication tools. These are advertising, sales promotion, public relations, and direct marketing—collectively referred to as the *communication mix*.

Advertising. Advertising is any form of paid, non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor, placed in a variety of media, including television, radio, cinema, newspapers, magazines/trade press, on an outdoor poster or transport advertising sign, etc.

Advertising is effective when the right message gets to the right customer. Likewise, the more customers are notified of a program's benefits, the more likely they are to participate. For instance, knowing what radio station's program participants listen to and when they

are most likely to be listening determines where a public service announcement (PSA) should be sent, what time of the day the PSA should be read, and which radio personality to ask to promote a program. In major marketing situations, ratings are printed in newspapers. A *pro bono* ad agency could also easily provide information on radio station listener preferences or newspaper circulation figures to assist in making decisions as to when and where to promote the organization or programs. Some of the different advertising media include: radio, television, newspapers, magazines, direct mail, flyers and brochures, billboards, and, more recently, movies and videos. When selecting media options, *reach* and *frequency* should be considered. Reach refers to the number of people that will be exposed to the advertisement, and frequency refers to the number of times that people will be exposed.

The organization staff responsible for communications must plan and schedule all advertising to ensure quality and effectiveness. Each advertising promotion will contribute to the customer's awareness and overall impression of the organization. Inconsistent use of the organization name, incomplete or inaccurate information, or not meeting the benefits stated will also create an image—a negative one.

An annual advertising campaign should be included in the organization's communication plan. This annual plan will ensure programs and services are promoted in an integrated manner, using a consistent message. The organization must employ policies and operating procedures that guide the development of promotional and/or informational campaigns.

Sales promotion. Sales promotion is any means of attempting to stimulate customers to purchase a product or service at the site or near the point of sale. Sales promotion activity includes the provision of gifts, discounts, premiums, leaflets, contests, display material, or demonstrations.

The key to sales promotion is finding the appropriate activity to stimulate the target market's needs and wants. This may be relatively easy, or a more challenging task depending on what the activities are. Sales promotions are more immediate and, therefore, may be favored in time of budgetary constraint because an immediate return on the investment can be demonstrated.

Public relations. Public relations is the management of communications between an organization and all entities that have a direct or indirect relationship with the organization. These are traditionally referred to as the organization's *publics*. However, public relations personnel are increasingly using the term *stakeholders* to describe all those audiences that have a stake in the

organization. A public or stakeholder is more than just any group of individuals. It is a group of people who have shared interests and common concerns for the organization.

The goal of public relations is to harmonize internal and external relationships, so that an organization can enjoy not only the good will of all of its publics, but also stability and long life. Public relations is often confused with publicity, but should be regarded as having a much broader function within the organization. To create effective public relations, an organization must:

1. understand its various publics;
2. be aware of the role of public information; and
3. establish good community relations.

An organization is faced with a myriad of critical publics with whom it must communicate on a frequent and direct basis. It must understand that self-interest groups are themselves complex. Whereas management must always speak with one voice, the inflection, delivery, and emphasis of its communications should be sensitive to the interests and concerns of all its constituent publics.

Public relations is concerned with managing the organization's relations with all those stakeholders whose support is needed for the organization to achieve its goals. The achievement of marketing goals is affected not only by customers, but also by others who have a "stake" in the success of an organization. These include employees, shareholders, boards, legislators, regulators, and the communities where the organizations are located. Messages to these and other important publics must be consistent with those communicated to customers. Customer service focuses upon the customer, and the publics that come into contact with the customers, such as employees, other customers, and vendors. Publics may be categorized as internal and external. Internal publics are those inside the organization structure. External publics are those not directly connected with the organization, but who have an influential role in the success of the organization.

Public information. To operate effectively, a park and recreation organization must have the support of its community, both internally and externally. An organization can build support by informing the public and news media of events that affect the lives of citizens in the community. An informed public is more likely to be a supportive public.

A public opinion survey by the California Center for Health Improvement concluded that Californians want to participate in cooperative efforts to shape policies, whether the efforts are led by local government,

community organizations, or citizens. The survey also found that neither volunteer organizations nor the government could effectively resolve community problems without engaging informed citizens.

An informed public will support the park and recreation organization, particularly if involved in the planning process and if connected to the organization. For example, when the city of Aurora CO designed its new Wheel Park, the city decided to turn to the experts: teenagers and the under-30 crowd. Since baby boomers had a hard time understanding all of the terms, the city built a core group of people who skateboard, play roller hockey, and participate in BMX races. They provided the city with the features that needed to be included to make the Wheel Park the "place to be." With their help and with the help of contractors who specialize in designing these types of parks, the project was a huge success.

The cost of silence by an organization whose products and services are a matter of public concern is high. The value of public understanding that grows from an aggressive communication program is incalculable (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994).

Community relations. An organization builds its reputation over time. A key ingredient in establishing reputation is having an informed public. Enhancing public awareness of and support for park and recreation services is perhaps the most important element of an organization's mission, particularly when finance is a major concern. It is highly unlikely that an organization will receive funding support from its policy makers and its constituents without effective communication. The manager must ensure that the policy makers and publics served understand and acknowledge the benefits derived from park and recreation services.

Direct marketing. The final component of the promotional mix is that of direct marketing. Direct marketing includes:

- direct mailing;
- telemarketing;
- door-to-door selling; and
- personal selling.

Direct marketing can take on many forms (i.e., personal contact, incentives, coupons, video/slide presentations, demonstrations, public speaking, posters, buttons or pins, etc.). Currently there is an increased importance of direct marketing as a promotional method for many park and recreation organizations.

Direct mailing is basically a strategy of direct personal contact by mail to specific segments of the public. This method has traditionally been the domain of charitable organizations in fundraising campaigns. Today, with the assistance of marketing databases, direct

mailing has spread to many other aspects, changing the focus of promotion to communication and dialogue. Direct mailing has been updated by:

- including interpretation and alternative services as part of the mix;
- recognizing that staff are part of the mix;
- incorporating customer education, (e.g., ethics, skill development); and
- identifying visitor safety and security as an important element.

Telemarketing. Modern technology has made this method of contacting customers more feasible. There are two types of activity—inbound and outbound. Inbound consists of clients or donors contacting the organization free of charge through a toll-free number. Outbound consists of the organization making personal direct calls to the potential customers or clients. This method has become a very competitive but an effective means of reaching clients on a personal basis. Telemarketers should be careful not to violate the federal Do Not Call Registry. Telemarketing has become an irritant to potential customers and recreation marketers should take care when using this approach, especially the time of day and day of the week that calls are made.

Door-to-door. This method has been especially effective for reaching local customers and in raising awareness of the organization's activities, or as a means of fundraising or canvassing to recruit volunteers. However, there is increasing concern around this method due to validity concerns, or security on the part of clients and those soliciting.

Personal selling. This method is often used by commercial recreation organizations that hire sales staff as a method of generating increased revenue from new or existing customers. It is also used for fundraising projects, capital campaigns, or for lobbying. In addition, within the service industry, current and former users may also conduct personal selling through passing on their satisfaction of the services via word of mouth. The development of service, relationship, and recreation marketing concepts continues to change and broaden the concept of marketing mix (see Exhibit 15.12). Service and experience marketing requires additional components or variables to be considered part of the marketing mix.

Additional Ps of Service and Experience Marketing

There are seven additional parameters of service and social marketing that must be considered to complete the market mix. These are:

- people,
- process,
- public image,

- physical evidence,
- peripherals,
- political impact, and
- PerInfoCom (O'Sullivan & Spangler, 1998).

People. In service and experience delivery, the people element is the heart and soul of the organization, whether those people are paid employees, volunteers, or customers. In a traditional product oriented business, the customer's experience with the product is not heavily influenced by the people (sales staff) from whom they purchase the product. However, in a service industry, the experience is largely governed by the people delivering the service. For example, a customer enrolled in an aerobics class, may find the instruction completely different from one class to another and from one instructor to another. Park and recreation employees who come into contact with visitors have multiple roles. They must produce, deliver, and market the service that the customer desires. They also perform basic service tasks, which are to educate the customer as to the behavior that will maximize satisfaction, receive and react to customer feedback, and modify the service offering to meet special needs or requests. The amount and quality of dialogue between employees and customers is one of the most crucial elements of service marketing. Frequently, the recreation experience is judged in part on the appearance and behavior of the employees with whom participants come in contact.

To provide some standardization of service, an organization may conduct an internal marketing audit, during which it critically evaluates the interaction between its customers and its employees and volunteers. Internal marketing is directed at employees and volunteers, not customers. It focuses upon the interaction of the employees and volunteers with the customers. Three primary interactions in determining customer satisfaction with services are: customer-employee interactions, customer interactions with the environment/facilities where the service is produced and delivered, and customer interactions with other customers. Organizations can manage these customer interactions to achieve marketing objectives. Customer interactions involve negotiating established organizational processes and procedures that one must complete to purchase or enjoy the service being provided.

Process. An organization should evaluate whether its processes and procedures (e.g., registration, payment and refund policies, parking, waiting areas, changing rooms, etc.) support or contradict its customer service approach. For example, having to wait in long lines for extended periods of time, or the lack of advanced reservation or payment procedures may result in an overall negative experience.

Exhibit 15.12

Marketing Mix for Park and Recreation Organizations



Physical evidence. Since services are intangible, it is important to give attention to those tangible components that do exist to ensure that they are contributing to overall customer satisfaction. These tangibles may include:

- *premises*—these include waiting areas, parking lots, entrances, service areas, etc.; they should be clean, safe, have appropriate signage, and be accessible;
- *facilities*—the importance of facilities is related to their appearance and up keep; customers should feel welcome, comfortable, and safe;
- *dress*—the presentation of the staff in appearance and demeanor toward customers can reinforce a professional and caring image; and
- *reports and communication*—written communications also present tangible cues to the professional image of the organization; brochures, flyers, and annual reports are visible means of evaluating the concern for quality of service (Sargeant, 1999).

Public image. Although public image is becoming more of an issue for businesses in the product-based industry, in the service industry public image is critical due to the direct interaction and relationship created with the cus-

tomers. For example, when one purchases a car, the car is the object of the consumer's interest; however, in the service industry the organization is the object of the interest and attention. Therefore, customers critically evaluate the organization's quality of service, as well as their established reputation. O'Sullivan (1991) has suggested using logos, slogans, and mascots to aid in enhancing an organization's public image and recognition. Disney is an excellent example of an organization that has devoted much attention to its public image.

Peripherals. Peripherals are additional factors an organization may consider to satisfy customers and create a positive public image. O'Sullivan and Spangler (1998) have noted that peripherals "provide meaning for the participant, and can be used to differentiate experiences from one another" (p. 107). Peripherals can be "changed, arranged or rearranged and staged for the purpose of creating a desired experience for the participant" (p. 130). For example, two organizations may deliver the same crafts program; however, one organization may provide additional supplies, extra lesson time, or socialization time after class. The peripherals are those factors within the organization's direct control, which provide added value to a program or service.

Political impact. Politics has an impact on all aspects of society today. Political issues are not limited to environmental issues, such as the recreational use of public lands versus the conservation of natural spaces, but also include economic, social, or technological issues. O'Sullivan (1991) has pointed out that nonprofit organizations and public organizations often come under pressure from an economic standpoint, as their tax status is challenged by commercial businesses who maintain they represent unfair competition. A current social political issue is the large number of aging adults (Foot & Stoffman, 1996), and their increasing vocalization of demands for more appropriate recreation programming and policy development around issues of their concern. For example, older citizens in Canada have founded a new political party in the province of New Brunswick, the Gray Party, which identifies itself as the voice of the "graying population."

PerInfoCom. "PerInfoCom" is a hybrid term made up from the words personalization, information, and communication. According to O'Sullivan & Spangler (1998), PerInfoCom addresses specific aspects of experience marketing. "[It] incorporates the need to communicate with people and to inform them about their needs as it relates to a particular experience while simultaneously doing so in such a personalized manner that will move them to take action" (p. 133). The key components of PerInfoCom include:

- *getting the attention* of the customer and assisting them in realizing that they have a need that can be addressed through recreation;
- *changing people's behavior* in a more socially positive manner or altering the behavior on a social issue;
- *creating relationships* that involve an exchange between the participant and the organization; and
- *making the most of resources*, including working with limited sources of support, (e.g., funding, personnel, equipment, facilities, etc.)

Component 6: The Marketing Budget

A marketing budget is not only a financial plan but a work plan (see Chapter 20, Budgeting). It shows the allocation of dollars among alternative marketing mixes and marketing activities on an annual timeline.

The primary determinant for quantity of dollars is a policy decision. What is the desirable marketing program, as defined by organizational objectives? What marketing strategies are to be used to meet the organization's goals, and objectives? Then, the marketing budget must be placed in perspective of the other

financial needs of the organization. Marketing budgets should be reassessed annually in terms of the task to be done and the financial condition of the organization. Basing marketing budgets on some percent of sales or budget, or what the competition spends, usually leads to over spending or under spending. Also, the dollars allocated are not the result of a work plan and may not be appropriately allocated.

Separate sub-budgets should be developed for each marketing mix strategy. The separate budgets are then aggregated to develop the overall marketing budget. If the total amount is too great, it will be necessary to modify the overall objective and target market objectives, narrow or drop target markets and/or, adjust marketing mixes. The final budget should be realistic, given the objectives. Although budgets should be flexible, every effort should be made to adhere to them. Revisions in the budget are made only after careful consideration of the likely effect of the change on the marketing mix and accomplishment of objectives.

Decisions as to how much to budget for marketing should consider other projected returns on investment from different marketing activities, not just cost. Often marketing activities, if successful, generate additional revenue, gate receipts, product sales, memberships, gifts, etc. These revenues can be estimated from the marketing objectives, for example, to increase off-season stay of tourists in the local area by 5 percent).

Component 7: Implementation

The first thing to consider when putting a marketing plan to work is who will be responsible for its implementation. One individual, or a particular unit, should be assigned the responsibility for implementing the marketing plan. While all park and recreation professionals should understand marketing principles, having a marketing professional on your staff can be highly beneficial. It is recognized that in a small organization this may not be feasible, and that these duties and marketing functions may be carried out by a volunteer or a committee, or a marketing position may be shared with other small departments. Whoever is responsible must, however, work closely with all of the organization units in developing, coordinating, and implementing the market plan. (See Exhibit 15.13 Marketing Position Specifications.)

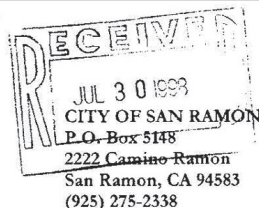
Managers should give employees information on the marketing plan, including its rationale, objectives, and strategies. The marketing specialist should identify specific tasks to be accomplished, with responsibility assigned to people or units/departments of the organization. Next, timelines for performing tasks and spending the stated budget allocation should be estab-

Exhibit 15.13

Marketing Position Specifications



INVITES
APPLICATIONS
FOR
**MARKETING AND
PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALIST**



SALARY

\$2,621 - 3,756 per month. Appointment to the position may be made within range depending upon the selected candidates experience and qualifications. Note: Actual payroll title is Office Specialist.

THE POSITION

The City of San Ramon is seeking an experienced, creative and innovative individual to create a variety of visual and written marketing materials to promote the City's recreation activities and facilities through development and implementation of a comprehensive marketing plan. Duties include; typesetting, design, layout and distribution of the Activities Guide and City Newsletter; creating marketing brochures, flyers and displays for department services and programs; working with the Chamber of Commerce on tourism and promotion of San Ramon; Coordinating the City Video Newsletter; preparing, coordinating and disseminating press releases, public service announcements and flyers; handling inquiries, requests and program registration from the public at the counter and on the phone; creating a variety of visual graphic needs; maintaining photo and video inventory; coordinating presentations to local groups, program publicity and special event permits; and providing clerical support as needed.

QUALIFICATIONS

You are encouraged to apply if you have:

1. three years increasingly responsible experience in typesetting, design and layout of a variety of publicity materials;
2. advanced skills in PageMaker 6.0, Adobe PhotoShop 4.0, Adobe Illustrator 7.0, and other PC based graphics programs;
3. knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite for Windows especially for use in graphic arts and presentations;
4. the ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing;
5. the ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with employees and the public;
6. the ability to develop an annual work plan;
7. the ability to work independently and efficiently;
8. a California Class C Driver's License by date of hire.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

****All applicants should submit 1-3 samples of their desktop publishing work (i.e.; flyers, newsletters, brochures...) with their employment application. Note: Samples will not be returned.****

The best qualified applicants, as determined by initial screening of applications, will be invited to participate in an interview process which may consist of both written and oral portions. Appointment will be made from the eligibility list established from the results of the interview process.

City application required. All applications must be mailed or delivered to Human Resources, P.O. Box 5148, 2222 Camino Ramon, San Ramon, CA 94583-1350. 24-Hour Job Hotline (925) 275-2338. EOE. The final filing deadline is 5:00 p.m., Monday, June 29, 1998 (Postmarks are not acceptable).

Information contained herein is subject to change without notice.

In accordance with Federal law, the City of San Ramon will only hire individuals who are legally authorized to work in the United States. As a condition of employment, you will be required to present proof of your identity and employment eligibility.

In accordance with the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), if special accommodations are necessary at any stage of the selection process, please contact Human Resources at (925) 275-2240.

CITY OF SAN RAMON MISSION STATEMENT

We provide efficient delivery of quality public services that are essential to those who live and work in San Ramon.


06/08/98

THE CITY OF SAN RAMON IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

Exhibit 15.13

Marketing Position Specifications (*continued*)


The City



Incorporated in 1983, the City of San Ramon is a rapidly growing community located in the East Bay Area of San Francisco. The City has a well-developed commercial economy, including a major office park in the center of the City, as well as an outstanding residential lifestyle of single- and medium-density housing.

Employee Benefits

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| <i>Vacation</i> | 12 paid vacation days accrued during the first year of service. |
| <i>Holidays</i> | 12.5 holidays per year. |
| <i>Sick Leave</i> | 1 day per calendar month of service. |
| <i>Retirement</i> | The City participates in the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) and contributes the employee's portion (7% of salary). |
| <i>Health Insurance</i> | Major portion of premium paid for employee and dependents with choice of Kaiser or City's self-insured plan. |
| <i>Dental Insurance</i> | Fully-paid premium for employee and dependents with choice of two different plans. |
| <i>Vision Care</i> | Fully-paid premium for employee and dependents. |
| <i>Disability Insurance</i> | Fully-paid premium for employee. |
| <i>Life Insurance</i> | The City pays for life insurance benefits at two times the employee's annual salary. A voluntary life insurance plan is available at the employee's option. |
| <i>Section 125 Plan</i> | The program is available to all employees for health care and dependent care expenses. |
| <i>Deferred Compensation</i> | The ICMA 457 Plan is available at the employee's option. |



CITY OF SAN RAMON
P.O. Box 5148
San Ramon, CA 94583

lished. The marketing specialist regularly monitors and evaluates progress.

The implementation phase of the market plan involves carrying out the marketing mix. Two challenging areas are working with the news media and quality service.

Working with News Media and the Community

Organizations must inform and respond to the community and the media about events within the public domain that are handled by, or involve the organization. Policy should be one of sensitivity, openness, and

candor. A relationship of mutual trust, cooperation, and respect must be developed and maintained. The organization should have a statement addressing how to handle news media interest in its operations, as well as how it intends to generate media interest. Policies should govern what information should be released, when it should be released, and who should release it.

The park and recreation organization should establish direct contacts with the communities served, especially special interest groups and concerned individuals. Without grassroots community support, successful programming may be difficult to sustain. A well-organized community relations effort can act as an effective means of eliciting public support and can serve to identify problems.

In a growing number of communities, the park and recreation organization must support a variety of languages and cultures. For example, the city of Aurora CO prints general information about the agency in various languages to ensure language is not a barrier to participation. (See Compendium 15-5 for an example of a multi-lingual flyer and Compendium 15-6 for tips for multi-lingual residents.) The organization should also ensure its message is easily understood, regardless of the education or cognitive ability level of the customer.

Every organization should establish a community relations plan. The steps to develop a positive reputation within the community can be the framework of the organization's community relations program. DeLapp (1995), has proposed six steps:

1. know where the organization stands;
2. develop a clear public relations message;
3. involve everyone in reputation management;
4. keep the organization visible on big issues;
5. work with other departments to improve public relations; and
6. be prepared to be tested by a crisis.

Know where the organization stands. What do residents, customers, policy makers, community leaders really think about the organization? Is their opinion the universal opinion? What are the important services, programs, or activities that define the organization's reputation? Is it a good one or a bad one?

Develop a clear message that reinforces the reputation the organization wants to have. If the organization does not clearly define what it is doing for the community, it cannot hope to build community loyalty and a positive reputation. Residents, community groups, policy makers, etc. must be able to recognize the benefits provided by their park and recreation organization.

Recognize that reputation management (community relations) is everyone's job. The organization manager

must insist that everyone is accountable for the reputation of the organization. Every contact they make with a resident is an opportunity to establish a positive or negative impression. Managers need to train staff and volunteers to approach every contact as a reputation building opportunity.

Make sure the organization is visible on the big issues.

Just as there is an opportunity to build the organization's reputation on a daily basis, there are large gains if the organization addresses community issues, whether it is youth violence, economic development, job development, or environmental degradation. If the organization is not viewed as a "player" in these issues, it will be viewed as non-essential.

The organization is only as good as the parent organization.

One of the important relationships of the park and recreation organization is with the larger parent (governmental, business, association) organization or the community itself. If the parent organization has a poor reputation, improving the organization's image will be more difficult. A successful strategy is to work with other departments or units within the organization to coordinate news releases, annual reports, and media relations to showcase achievements and benefits provided by the parent organization.

Crisis management tests the organization's reputation.

A crisis can make or break the organization's reputation. If there is not a written crisis management plan, create one. In the heat of a crisis, the eyes of the media and the organization's customers watch the organization's every move.

A park and recreation organization should make use of the many community organizations in its neighborhood, and establish formal relationships with them. More important, the organization should organize community groups where they do not exist. By establishing community links, the park and recreation organization learns of issues, and can respond to them before they become problems. By developing programs geared toward increasing the community's understanding of its activities, the organization can build public confidence and lessen obstacles to implementing new programs that could otherwise fail for want of public understanding or accurate information.

The only limit to establishing public relations programs and conducting activities should be the imagination and resourcefulness of those involved. There are many vehicles for communicating a public relations message to the media:

- press releases;
- media events;

- media kits to introduce reporters and editors to the organization and current issues of the profession; and
- the Internet, that is, principally Web sites and e-mail.

Tips for Writing Press Releases

When writing press releases, it is important to convey information in a timely and accurate manner. Managers dealing with the media should consider their primary objectives to be to inform, to persuade, to remind, and/or to familiarize (O'Sullivan, 2002; O'Sullivan & Spangler, 1998) reporters and editors. The public information function of a park and recreation agency should include:

- assisting news personnel in covering routine news stories;
- availability for responses to the news media;
- preparing and distributing news releases; and
- arranging for and assisting at news conferences.

The organization's written marketing plan should address how the organization will handle news media interest, as well as situations in which the organization wishes to generate media interest.

Effective communication means knowing to whom you are speaking, and understanding their needs and mindset, particularly when communicating with the media. It is essential to understand the differences between the needs and preferences of print (magazines, newspapers) and electronic (radio, television) media.

When sending out a press release, follow seven steps.

1. send it to the right reporter or a specific individual within an organization who handles press releases;
2. if possible, contact the editor personally, to peak interest, before sending the press release;
3. send it in the right format, at the right time; different media have different time lines so it is important to know guidelines for press release distribution and format; are you submitting to monthly magazine, daily newspaper, television, or radio?
4. report what is newsworthy;
5. make the content "catchy," by including headlines that grab attention, use of the words "you", "new", and "how to";
6. use short punchy paragraphs, and answer the questions, "Who?" "What?" "When?" "Where?" "Why?" and "How?" in the first paragraph; for each sentence ask — "so what?" avoid hype and industry jargon; use standard journalistic style; and
7. be brief (Buchanan, n.d.).

(See Exhibit 15.14 and refer to online resources at the end of this chapter.)

E-mailing press releases. If using e-mail to distribute press releases, consider the following. E-mail press releases are usually shorter in length than their print counterparts because long messages can be truncated by e-mail software; information such as photographs, biographies of company executives, white papers, and other supporting documents usually included in a print media kit may be published online for easy access by reporters; some reporters have limited online access so always include a contact method for those who prefer to have materials mailed to them.

Getting Along with the Media

There are two steps for getting along with the media. First, get to know your local reporters. Second, treat them well.

Getting to know press staff. Organization staff responsible for public information should get to know all general assignment reporters at the local newspaper(s). Staff should invest the time to meet reporters and to know them on a first-name basis. A measure of effectiveness for the strategy is having the reporter return unsolicited phone calls or the reporter calls to verify a story before publishing it. All organization staff should be regularly briefed on who to contact when the media arrives at an event. Directions or story ideas should be presented; participants should be available to be interviewed. Train staff on how to respond when contacted by media. Give tips on dress, and practice responses.

Relating to the media. An often-heard lament of park and recreation organizations is that news releases are not printed, or are changed to exclude the key information. It is easy to blame the media, but staff members should take some responsibility. Did they make the release exciting, different, and engaging? Did they make it easy to find key information by making the release concise and readable? Members of the media sometimes work in extremely high-pressure circumstances. Under constant deadlines, members of the media may seem abrupt and pushy. Park and recreation managers need to be informative and helpful in a timely manner. They should return phone calls promptly; usually, a day's delay is too long. If the organization cannot meet a deadline, or if a deadline seems impossible, the manager should let the reporter know, so that the organization's credibility does not suffer. Typical media deadlines vary by newsroom and by newsroom technologies. Learn the deadlines for your local outlets.

Ishii and Westrup (1997) have offered these suggestions to maintain effective media relationships:

Exhibit 15.14
News Release Tips

NEWS RELEASE

<Organization> • <Address> • <City, State Zip> • <Telephone> • <Fax>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Phone:

Fax:

Title of Press Release City and State of Origin, Date — Double space body text throughout release. **Copy:** Copy is written text. Include the most complete and accurate information possible while being brief and factual. Avoid editorial comments, personal opinions, or conclusions drawn on the information. Use simple words and sentences.

Lead: The opening sentence is the most important segment of the press release; it will either make or break the news at the editor's desk. Tell the essential facts of the story in a manner that grabs the readers' interest. In the lead, communicate the "who, what, when, where, why, and how" of the story.

Body: Journalistic writing employs the "inverted pyramid" stylistic structure, which "builds down" by communicating the most essential information in the lead, then relating details in descending order of importance. In other words, start with the big picture, then add details, from most to least important. To ensure that the release is easy to read, keep the following points in mind:

- use people's complete names: first name, middle initial, last name;
- avoid industry jargon that may confuse the average reader;
- use simple vocabulary; major newspapers average five letters per word;
- limit sentences to no more than two ideas each; and
- limit paragraphs to three to four sentences each.

Conclusion: This is the appropriate place to communicate descriptive information about the organization. Briefly note the organization's history, membership, and facilities information. Limit the conclusion to two to three sentences. If the release is longer than one page, type MORE in the center of the bottom line of the first page.

To indicate the end of the release, type "# # #" in the center of the bottom line.

1. invite the media to tour a facility, view a program, or share a concern; get the media on park and recreation "turf" to explain the benefits of programs or facilities; the manager will need a significant "hook" to accomplish this; do not get discouraged if there are no shows—just keep asking;
2. call the television and newspaper news desks a few days before events; talk to the assignment editor to check if the events are on their schedule;
3. spend twice as much time on composing the opening statement for your press releases and keep the releases short and simple; compress the interesting facts in the first paragraph; expand on them later in the release.
4. personalize a story by putting a face and name on the topic; the media reacts positively to the human-interest perspective;
5. include appropriate contact names and phone numbers in the release;
6. emphasize the topic's relevance to the average reader/viewer; tie the story into other current events; ask, "Why should anyone care to know about this?" and give the answer in the press release;
7. take care of the reporter or photographer covering your event; offer them shade and refreshments;
8. find the perfect spot for an interview before the reporter arrives; and
9. locate a public relations firm that might do *pro bono* work to boost its community service image.

Freedom of Information Act

All documents an organization produces fall under the broad umbrella of *public information*. A public agency is

subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and most documents have to be made available to members of the public upon appropriate request. Therefore, be cognizant of what is provided in written form.

All reports, news releases, brochures, fliers, informational signs, policies, rules and regulations should be formatted so they are easily recognizable as being from the organization. The *organization logo* should be on all materials to encourage this easy recognition, presenting an instant visual cue. All written documents, if appropriate, should contain the mission statement of the organization. Each time a program or service is described, it should identify how that service or program addresses the achievement of the organization's mission.

Alternatives for Advertising

An organization *should not* rely solely upon the media as its primary vehicle for communicating to the public, as there are many other ways that the park and recreation organization can enhance its reputation and communicate the benefits of its programs and services. Advertising, personal contacts, and sales promotions are elements of the promotional mix an organization can use to inform its customers.

Alternative methods of advertising include:

- window displays at shopping centers, libraries, airports, and business complexes;
- billboards;
- building murals;
- organization stores selling merchandise with organization or program logos or names;
- audiocassette tapes;
- gift catalogs;
- gift certificates;
- coupon books (promoting savings for repeat customers);
- frequent buyer cards (promoting convenience and savings);
- inserts in utility bills;
- direct mail pieces to targeted audiences;
- event or facility posters, fliers, brochures;
- ads in local magazines, city newsletters, chamber of commerce bulletins;
- a regular column in a local newspaper;
- a speaker's bureau;
- videotapes and public service announcements;
- cable television or radio programs;
- open houses at park and recreation facilities;
- bus benches/bus signs;
- restaurant restroom ads;
- movie theatre ads; and

- special events, either on site or tie-ins, such as booths, demonstrations, etc. at community events.

Special events attract non-traditional audiences or visitors who have limited experience with the breadth of the services that the park or recreation organization has to offer. Special events designed as "sampling opportunities" for the underserved of an organization's market can play a significant role in increasing public awareness of parks and related services. Research strongly suggests that many people are often unaware of park and recreation services, even when they live nearby. Special events can therefore, play an important role towards creating awareness. (See the special events section in Chapter 9.)

Component 8: Marketing Evaluation Process

As soon as the marketing plan has been implemented, management must assume responsibility for monitoring the progress of the plan in meeting the organization's goals and objectives. Of equal concern is regularly tracking the costs and monitoring them against the costs budgeted.

At least quarterly, if not monthly, the staff member or unit responsible for the marketing function should submit an activity report to the organization manager. These reports should be collated into an overall evaluation annual.

When the marketing plan is being designed, managers must devise controls to monitor, evaluate, and adjust marketing activities to meet different marketing objectives. Marketing mix strategies need to be continually evaluated, not only during the actual program or service delivery. (See Exhibit 15.15 Marketing Evaluation Process.)

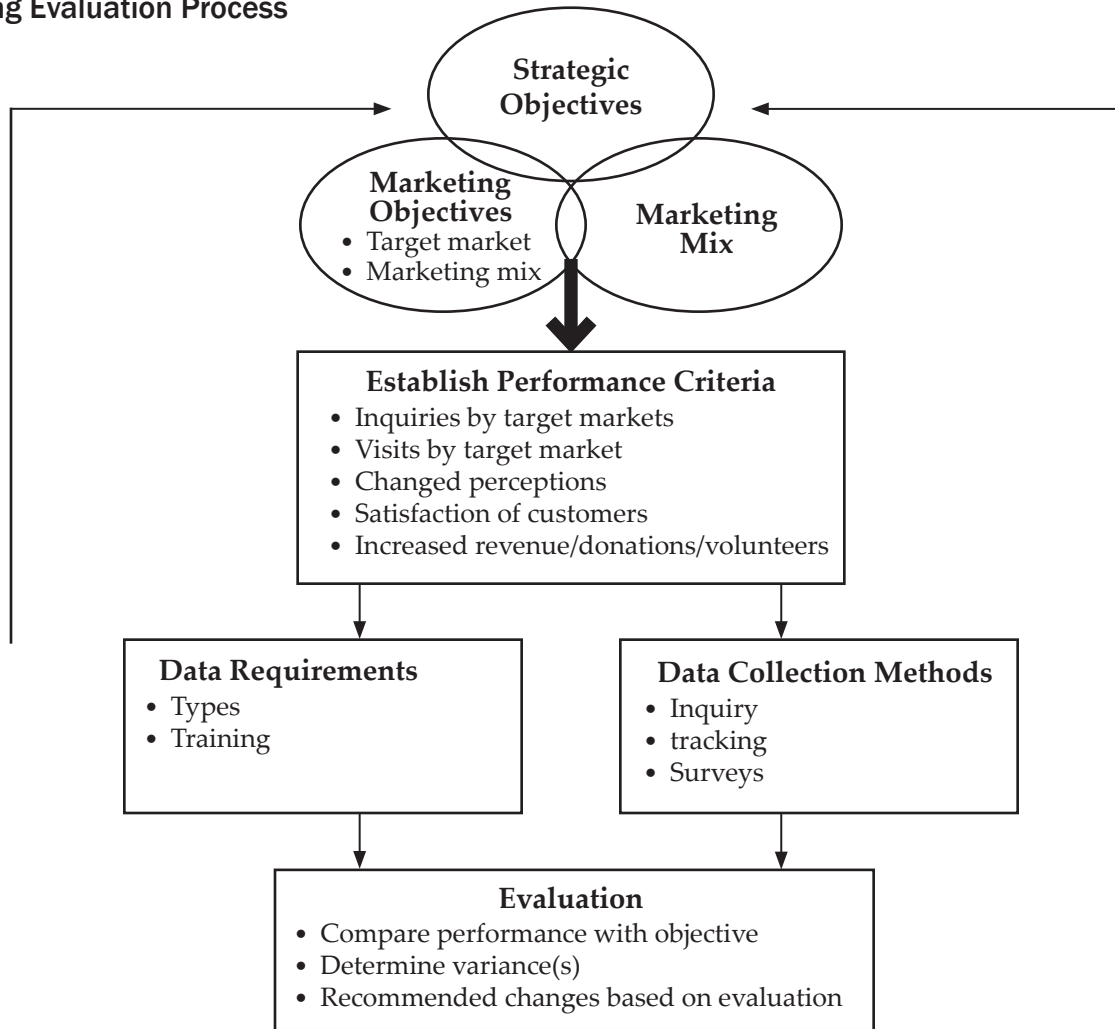
A control system collects and analyzes information that provides indications of:

- whether and to what degree different marketing activities have been successfully implemented;
- the extent to which different marketing objectives have been achieved;
- whether and to what extent various marketing activities contributed to their achievement; and
- how to correct poor performance and enhance marketing activities.

The marketing plan must include a *control system*, that is, a means to monitor and assess the effectiveness of different marketing activities. The framework for a control system should include:

Exhibit 15.15

Marketing Evaluation Process



- determining which elements of the marketing mix are most important to evaluate; it is rarely possible or cost effective to evaluate all of an organization's marketing activities simultaneously; criteria could include cost of the marketing activity, the prioritization of marketing objectives, and the cost of collecting and analyzing the data;
- establishing performance standards or benchmarks to compare against actual results; marketing objectives, if properly formulated, should serve as the performance standards;
- developing formal and informal methods for collecting data on actual results; methods include Web page response forms, formal surveys, informal surveys;
- comparing results with performance criteria; and

- determining needed change(s) in objectives and or marketing activities.

Service improvement must be managed as an ongoing process because:

- even a well-rounded, carefully designed service program requires tinkering and customizing;
- customers and their preferences change over time, as do the type and quality of programs, facilities, and services offered by the competition; what is considered quality today may be inferior tomorrow;
- a service standard that meets the expectations of longtime customers may not measure up to the expectations of new or targeted potential customers; and
- unless they are carefully monitored, even effective customer service efforts can deteriorate

over time, due to employee and management turnover, gradual changes in organizational culture, and other factors.

The only way to ensure service quality improvement is to collect, analyze, and distribute information that compares actual performance against objectives and standards, and to determine changes in customers' perceptions of quality. It is important that top management communicate to all managers, supervisors, and employees that measurement of customer satisfaction is a crucial part of their job responsibilities and not an "only-after-everything-else-is-done" activity. They also must demonstrate the relevance of measurement by taking corrective actions suggested by the results of monitoring. There are three monitoring approaches:

1. the *internal approach*, which focuses on measuring actual performance (e.g., actual time customers spend waiting in lines, or average time it takes to respond to inquiries) against service standards;
2. the *external approach*, which utilizes comment cards, customer surveys, unsolicited comments, complaint analysis, and other methods, to gauge customer perceptions of quality; and
3. *regular, unannounced inspections* by internal teams or mystery customers/shoppers.

Organizations that do the most effective job of monitoring customer satisfaction and their service improvement efforts:

- monitor and analyze performance information collected from a variety of different methods (e.g., comment cards, interviews with customers, inspections, and employee surveys);
- communicate performance information on a regular basis to employees throughout the organization; sharing quality improvement information with all employees, regardless of function, enhances awareness that customer satisfaction is everyone's responsibility;
- emphasize assessing the quality of programs, facilities, and services from the perspective of customers rather than relying on measures of effort or inputs (e.g., dollars spent on quality

improvement); their bottom line is not effort or inputs, but customer-recognized improvement;

- insist on valid, measurable information, do not fudge the numbers to make the organization look better, and view bad news as good news if it results in quality enhancement; and
- constantly work hard to develop an organizational culture where employees view the results of customer satisfaction and service assessments as opportunities rather than as threats or indictments of their performance.

Summary

Service and experience marketing have philosophical (marketing orientation) and functional levels (market planning). There are subtle differences between commercial or for-profit marketing and not-for-profit marketing. Although the basic concepts are the same, the emphasis and philosophy of service and social marketing differ from for-profit marketing.

In any park and recreation organization, marketing functions should be the direct responsibility of an individual in a permanent position (see Compendium 15-7 for a job description from Cleveland Metroparks). This individual works closely with all units of the organization to develop, coordinate, and implement the marketing plan. Marketing must be shared at all levels, including those people responsible for carrying out market research and ensuring the quality of services. There must be constant monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the facilities, natural resources, program, and services from the user's perspective.

One chapter it is not sufficient to do justice to every aspect of marketing. Further reading and research of those sources listed in the resources section below will offer a more comprehensive understanding of the aspects of marketing as they relate to park and recreation organizations. For other helpful compendium examples, see Compendium 15-8, Marketing Campaign Worksheet; Compendium 15-9, Marketing Evaluation Worksheet; Compendium 15-10, Target Marketing Efforts; and Compendium 15-11, Marketing Research.

Resources

- Allen, S. (2001). *The future of event marketing*. Retrieved July 25, 2002 from <http://www.event-solutions.com/articles/o911FEAT2.html>.
- Center for Association Leadership (October, 2005). Kotler taps into marketing trends. *Associations Now Magazine*. Washington, DC.
- Berkowitz, E. N., Crane, F. G., Kerin, R. A., Hartley, S. W., & Rudelius, W. (1995). *Marketing* (2nd ed.). Toronto, ON: Times Mirror.
- Buchanan, Y. (n.d.). *Writing the bulletproof press release*. Retrieved March 2004 from <http://ezinearticles.com/?7-Steps-to-Writing-the-Bullet-Proof-Press-Release&id=2674667>
- Canadian Parks and Recreation Association. (1997). *The benefits catalogue*. Gloucester, ON.
- Cleveland Metroparks (1997, January) *Cleveland Metroparks Marketing Plan*. Cleveland, OH.
- Cutlip, S. M., Center, A. H., & Broom, G. M. (1994). *Effective public relations* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- DeLapp, T. (1995, October/November). Building and maintaining a positive public image. *California Society of Association Executives Update*.
- Driver, B. L., Brown, P. J., & Peterson, G. L. (1991). *Benefits of leisure*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing.
- Fifteen ways the Internet will prove to be a vital resource for your organization. (1996, Spring). *Management Strategy*, 20, 4.
- Foot, D. K. & Stoffman, D. (1998). Boom, bust & echo: Profiting from the demographic shift in the 21st century. Toronto, CA: Macfarlane, Walter & Ross.
- Fried, G. (2005). *Managing sport facilities*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Ishii, M., & Westrup, L. (1997, Spring). Communicating with the media. *California Parks and Recreation*, 53, 8–12.
- Jackowski, M. (2000, Spring). Marketing the benefits: Understanding the product. *Michigan Parks and Recreation*, 28–30.
- Kotler, P., Roberto, N., & Lee, N. (2002) *Social marketing: Improving the quality of life*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kaczynski, A.T. & Potwarka, L.R. (2007). Marketing recreation and leisure services. In R.E McCarville & K.J. MacKay (Eds.), *Leisure for Canadians* (pp. 295-303). Venture Publishing Inc.
- Kyle, B. (2009). The definition of marketing. Has it changed? Retrieved July 16, 2009 from http://www.websitemarketingplan.com/marketing_management/marketing_change.htm
- McDaniel, C., Jr., & Gates, R. (1995). *Marketing research essentials*. Minneapolis: West Publishing Company.
- McDonald, M., & Payne, A. (1996). *Marketing planning for services*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- National Recreation and Park Association (2003). *Benefits-based programming curriculum manual*. Ashburn, VA: Author.
- Novatorov, E.V. & Crompton, J.L. (2001). Reformulating the Conceptualization of Marketing in the Context of Public Leisure Services. *Leisure Studies*, 20(1), 61–75.
- Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership. (2009). Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation. Retrieved on June 5, 2009 from www.tourismpartners.com/TcisCtrl?site=partners&key1=home&language=EN.
- O'Sullivan, E. L. (1991). *Marketing for parks, recreation, and leisure*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing.
- O'Sullivan, E. (2002, Spring). Experience marketing. *Michigan Parks and Recreation*. 9–10.
- O'Sullivan, E. L., & Spangler, K. J. (1998). *Experience marketing: Strategies for the new millennium*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing.
- Penner, B. (1996, March). *Hunches are not enough—why it pays to poll*. Retrieved April 2002, from Canadian Fund Raiser at charityvillage.com.
- Pride, W. M., Ferrell, O. C., Blotnick, K., & Grant, S. (2009). *Marketing* (2nd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.
- Recreation Nova Scotia. (2005). Recreation Nova Scotia: Healthier futures through recreation. Retrieved June 5, 2009 from www.recreationns.ns.ca/.
- Rudick, J. L. & Koslowski, R. (2000). *BAM—Benefits Activated Marketing*. Oceanside, CA: Advisors Marketing Group.
- Sargeant, A. (1999). *Marketing management for nonprofit organizations*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sogo Active. (2009). Sogo Active is the sickest way to live healthy. Retrieved July 16, 2009 from <http://www.icoke.ca/liveolympic/sogo-active>.
- Swartz, T. A., Bowen, D. E., & Brown, S. W. (Eds.). (1993). *Advances in services marketing and management: Research and practice*. (Vol. 2). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, Inc.
- White, R. (2001). Increasing memberships and revenues with children's entertainment & edutainment. Retrieved May, 2002 from www.whitehutchinson.com/leisure/convergence.
- Wexler, J. (1997). *Market planning and research*. Retrieved March 2004 from http://www.bizmonthly.com/8_1997_focus/wexler.html
- Zeithaml, V. A., & Bitner, M. J. (1996). *Services marketing*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Ziethaml, V. A., Parasuraman, A., & Berry, L. L. (1990). *Delivering quality service: Balancing customer perceptions and expectations*. New York: The Free Press.

Authors, Consultants, and Contributors

Dr. Nila Ipson is a retired associate professor from Dalhousie University, where she taught in the School of Health and Human Performance for 33 years. Her research interests have focused in marketing, volunteerism and volunteer management, organizational structure and management of not-for-profit organizations, and leisure and aging. She and Laurene Rehman co-authored a chapter on private recreation for *Leisure for Canadians*, a 2007 textbook for Venture Publishing.

Dr. Laurene Rehman is an associate professor at Dalhousie University. Her specialty is recreation management and her research focuses upon understanding issues related to access to recreation and leisure for a variety of groups. She is also President Elect of Recreation Nova Scotia. She and Nila Ipson co-authored a chapter on private recreation for *Leisure for Canadians*, a 2007 textbook for Venture Publishing.

Dawn Stegen is the Manager of Recreation for Nova Scotia Health Promotion and Protection. Previously, Dawn was the Executive Director for Recreation Nova Scotia for 10 years. She has a wealth of experience in advocating for the importance of quality recreation and its impact on individuals and communities.

Contributor

Thanks to Jane Chirstyson, Director Marketing and Golf Clubhouse Services at Cleveland Metroparks, for her contributions to this chapter.

Previous Authors

Edward M. Mohoney, co-author for the first and second editions.

Jane H. Adams, California Parks and Recreation Society, practitioner for the first and second editions.

