

Chapter 15

Public Relations, Marketing, and Customer Service

Case Studies

Case Study #1: Providing Recreation Services for Mature Students on a University Campus

The Dalplex is a modern multi-purpose sport and recreation facility at a medium-sized Canadian university with a 15,000 student enrollment and a faculty and staff of 900. The mandate is to provide athletic and recreational services to the university community of faculty, staff, and students, as well as the local community. The university has a major intercollegiate athletic program, and a well-established campus recreation program with typical intramurals, sport clubs and leisure instructional programs (in such areas as aquatics, racquet sports, team sports, fitness, lifestyle activities, special events, etc.). Increased demand for more leisure and recreation services and facility time from among the Dalplex users, along with the increased costs of program delivery and facility operations has caused the management to seek greater insight into their overall service delivery. Informal participation surveys identified some gaps in services.

Many social changes and economical constraints (i.e., increased unemployment, increased costs of living, changing family structures, increased number of women entering the work force, etc.) have resulted in a changing face of the typical university population. University campuses in the 1990s were no longer populated by the traditional 18- to 22-year-old students entering from out of high school. Enrollments at Canadian universities during the 1990s showed that 35 percent to 40 percent of students enrolling in university were older “non-traditional” students. These changing demographics of the university population required new management strategies to ensure the mandates were being met. Dalplex management sponsored a **market segmentation study**, carried out to specifically determine the needs and perceived benefits from campus recreation programs for the increasing mature student population, which was deemed to be under serviced.

The results of the market segmentation identified four clusters from 679 mature students over 25 years of age. Based on their identified psychological benefits sought from leisure activity participation in campus recreation programs, namely self-enhancement, personal achievement, health and fitness, escape and relaxation, social contact, and family togetherness, the following groups of mature students were identified. The **Socializers** (29%), the **Fitness Activity Avoiders** (4%), the **Family Togetherness Seekers** (13%), and the **Generalists** (54%).

The **Socializers (n=198)** were of an average age of 30. Most (39%) had never married, 18% were separated, 8% divorced, while 23% were married. They were evenly split between being full- or part-time students, and most of them worked either full or part time, meaning they had very busy, demanding schedules. Twenty three percent had children living at home. More than 70% of this group had an annual household income of \$20,000 or less. Their motives for seeking higher education were mainly for professional advancement and social contact. The major barriers to participation were lack of money, distance from campus, and lack of transportation. Their activity preferences were physical sports and games, nature-oriented activities, and involvement in clubs and special interests groups.

The **Fitness Activity Avoiders (n=29)** were on average over the age of 35 and about 5% of this segment were over the age of 60. The majority were married and 23% were divorced or

separated. Of these, 37% had children living at home. The majority were part-time students with incomes ranging from between \$30,000 and \$60,000. Their reason for pursuing higher education was for either career advancement, cognitive stimulation, or social interaction. The greatest barriers to participation in campus recreation were a lack of skill competencies, personal health reasons, or a general lack of interest in structured recreation activities. Their preferred recreational activities favored nature-oriented activities, volunteer work, and involvement in special interest groups. They expressed a real lack of interest in fitness-related or sport-related activities.

The **Family Togetherness Seekers (n=89)** were predominantly over the age of 35, were married and had children living at home. They were mostly enrolled part-time at the university, and worked full time. Their average household income ranged from \$30,000 to over \$60,000. Their main reasons for attending university was for self-enhancement, improvement of career skills, and increased career opportunities. They were most hindered from participation in campus recreation by family obligations, lack of child care, distance from campus, and lack of funds. The latter responses were representative of the 37% who were single parents and were from the lower income levels. Their main recreational interests were in family-oriented activities and special events, outdoor and nature-based activities, or arts and cultural experiences.

The **Generalists (n=365)** were the largest group with an average age of 33. They were split among those having never married (46%), married (40%) divorced or separated (12%), and widowed (2%). Over 46% of this target market had children living at home. Their reasons for seeking higher education were professional advancement, education preparation, family togetherness, and social interaction. The biggest constraints to their participation were insufficient time, inconvenient location, and time schedules for activities, and a lack of knowledge of programs and events. The recreation interests were more general in nature and centered around most types of sport and leisure activities. Particular mention was made of interest in hobbies and crafts, as well as involvement in clubs or special interest groups.

From the survey **general comments** of special needs came the following recommendations: Need for on campus child care after school, in the evenings and on weekends to allow time for these mature students to participate in recreation, go to the library to search for materials, and take exams. Need for appropriate changing rooms to accommodate family needs, and request for the allocation of a special location on campus that was specifically assigned where mature students could meet and socialize other than the typical student facilities which did not meet their needs or social interests.

The Problem:

*Using the information from this chapter and the case study, select a target group from the above targeted markets, give a rationale for targeting the group, consider programs and services available or needed, consider the strength and weaknesses of the existing services and then prepare a **Marketing Plan** addressing each of the elements of the “**marketing mix**” spelled out in Exhibit 11-21 to best market the campus recreation services to your targeted group.*

Case Study #2: Promoting a New Urban Park to Cleveland Residents

A more diverse recreation population with increased service expectations has forced public recreation managers to consider using marketing tools and approaches to more appropriately match recreation opportunities with existing demand. No longer is it acceptable to provide recreation programming and settings in a cafeteria approach. Specific programs and specific park

settings will need to be geared toward different user groups.

Cleveland Metroparks is a park agency charged with managing public conservation and recreation spaces in the greater Cleveland area. Challenges include a region-wide disappearance of natural areas; an aging park infrastructure, changes in the demographic makeup of its tax base (in terms of cultural diversity), the loss of leisure time, and ever-changing recreation activity interests. The mission of Cleveland Metroparks is to conserve significant natural resources and enhance people's lives by providing safe, high-quality, outdoor education, recreation, and zoological opportunities.

Cleveland Metroparks has actively committed itself to marketing recreation and outdoor education opportunities to its constituents. Previous studies of the public use of parks indicated that 27 percent were non users, 33 percent were infrequent users, and 40 percent were regular users. In comparing Cleveland Metroparks tax district population to the 40 percent regular visitors, the following differences were found:

- Women use the parks less than men
- Non-users are older than both infrequent and regular users
- African-Americans are far more likely than whites to be non-users or infrequent users of public parks
- Non-users and infrequent users tend to be of lower income

When asked whether specific changes in park operations or programming would result in more visitation by non-users, 50 percent said they would use parks more if they were developed closer to home, 71 percent said that they would use parks more if additional information about parks and programs were readily provided (See Table 1).

A follow-up survey of visitors to the parks indicated that their visitation was frequent, yet brief (35 percent of visitors said they stayed for less than one hour) and that visitation came from people who lived nearby the parks. Most of the use involved a social component (i.e., family picnicking, group recreation outings) and only one out of ten visitors said they came to the parks alone. The four most popular activities were relaxation, walking/hiking, picnicking, and nature observation. Visitors said they kept informed about park activities and services through the *Plain Dealer* newspaper (45 percent), word-of-mouth (31 percent), *Emerald Necklace* newsletter (22 percent), and Radio (16 percent). The typical user of the Park District was more likely to be male, white, and possess above average income. Beyond this, users were quite diverse with segments of infrequent and frequent users, and packages of popular activities among small pockets of user groups.

A significant amount of Cleveland Metroparks' tax base lives within the urban core of the city of Cleveland (approximately 36 percent), yet most park opportunities have been developed in the outlying suburbs of the city. To provide more accessible recreation and outdoor education opportunities to these citizens (27 percent of which are minority), Cleveland Metroparks has partnered with local industries to develop a new park in its urban downtown area. This park, named Ohio and Erie Canal Reservation, covers 325 acres of public and donated land in the northernmost watered portion of the historic Ohio and Erie Canal and is home to many plant and wildlife species. Most importantly, this park places outdoor recreation and education opportunities within a 15-minute drive or 30-minute walk to 400,000 people. Park District surveys indicate that these travel distances are key to attracting regular and frequent park visitors. Many of these people have had less access to Cleveland Metroparks facilities and programs before this new reservation was developed.

Many partners and sponsors were instrumental in developing this park and it is now time to communicate that it will be opened for public use and enjoyment. One particular partner, The Cleveland Foundation, had proposed to offer a grant of \$75,000 for promoting this new park and its offering. However, this funder has made this grant funding contingent on demonstrating the reasons for and the advantages of using various promotional techniques. Some of the promotional alternatives are presented in Exhibit A. Moreover, these promotional techniques need to be consistent with the promotional goals of the Canal Reservation (both in terms of the park's opening and in its long-term operation). The goals of the Canal Reservation promotional campaign are to raise public awareness of the existence of Ohio and Erie Canal Reservation to traditionally underserved groups, promote Cleveland Metroparks mission of conservation, education and outdoor recreation to the tax district, and encourage visitation to Ohio and Erie Canal Reservation from the tax district, especially among underserved groups.

The Problem:

Based on what you know about the Canal Reservation, its target market, and the mission of Cleveland Metroparks, what kinds of promotions should be conducted with this money? What proportion of money or effort would you devote to each kind of promotion? How would you defend your choice to the funder?

EXHIBIT A

Cost

- \$18,500 • 16-page supplement in Cleveland Magazine (local 50,000 plus subscriber-based gloss magazine) with maps, feature stories, contact information, etc.
- \$7,500 • Speakers Bureau — visits community groups, neighborhood associations, and senior centers in target area with a general overview presentation of Cleveland Metroparks and specific information about Ohio and Erie Canal Reservation. Target to adults.
- \$36,000 • Direct-mail 16-page supplement to 216,000 households that are within the 15- to 30-minute target travel area.
- \$10,000 • Local display advertising — two 1/4-page ads each in ten weekly publications.
- \$15,000 • Radio buys; some target to ethnic stations, the remainder to women 19 to 54 years of age and seniors.
- \$15,000 • Video — 7 to 8 minute professionally produced video following the development and building of Canal Reservation, as well as the history of Ohio and Erie Canal, the Clean Water Act, the 1969 Cuyahoga River fire, and other key themes.
- \$4,000 • Bracket/street banner installations in 32 key locations around Canal Reservation.
- \$10,000 • Advertising targeted at community-wide publications.
- \$20,000 • Grand Opening Celebration with ethnic and popular music, dance, self-guided reservation tours, exhibits from related organizations, and naturalist-led hikes.
- \$60,000 • Community-wide television buy, including cable purchases, same demographics as radio.

- \$15,000 • School/community group programs — Outdoor Education programs (on-site and in school), historical interpreter (costumed song and dramatic presentations about canal-era populations), and visits by NatureTracks, a 38-foot colorfully outfitted vehicle that travels to schools, neighborhood youth organizations, and other groups.
- \$5,000 • Local display advertising, one-quarter page ad in 10 local publications.
- \$10,000 • Minority publications (African-American, Hispanic, etc.) 1/4 page advertisement at least twice.

The foundation finally chose the following:

- \$19,000 • 16-page supplement
- \$36,000 • Direct mail of supplement to 216,000 households
- \$10,000 • Local display advertising — two 1/4 page ads in ten weekly publications
- \$10,000 • Minority publications 1/4 page advertisement at least twice

Table 1
Changes That Might Result in People Using Public Parks More

Possible Changes	Percent (%)
Reduce development in parks	1
Provide public transportation to parks	34
Reduce costs	38
Provide child care assistance	39
Reduce travel time to parks	41
Reduce overcrowding in parks	42
Develop parks closer to home	52
Provide more activities	56
Provide more information about existing parks and programs	71
Make parks safer	72