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Development of A Multi-Dimensional Scale for Implementing Positioning in Public Park and Recreation Agencies

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Positioning is concerned with influencing the place an organization holds in the minds of stakeholders relative to competitors. It has been advocated as key to public park and recreation agencies' efforts to compete successfully for tax allocations. There are three fundamental axioms of positioning. First, positions are determined not by the image that a service provider seeks to convey, but rather by how this image is perceived in the minds of stakeholders. Second, an agency's position is considered by stakeholders not in isolation, but rather it is perceived in relation to that of its competitors. Third, positioning requires consistency and tight focusing of a selected message over a long time period, often many years.

The centrality of positioning in the parks and recreation field has been accentuated in recent years by the emergence of (i) the Benefits Approach to Leisure and (ii) by the development of a new theoretical paradigm to explain public sector marketing. The revised paradigm replaces the traditional notion of voluntary exchange with the concept of redistribution controlled by elected officials and voters. Both of these two movements have caused agencies to recognize that the key to resource acquisition is establishing the public benefits of parks and recreation in elected officials' and voters' minds. This is accomplished using real, psychological, and competitive repositioning strategies.

To implement an effective repositioning strategy, agencies need to empirically identify priority issues in a community and stakeholders' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of park and recreation services in addressing those issues. To do this, an instrument was developed which will enable agencies to identify the issues deemed most important in the community, and to measure stakeholders' perceptions of the performance of park and recreation agencies and their 'competitors' in addressing those issues.

Initially, the park and recreation repositioning scale (PARRS) was conceptualized to be comprised of ten domains represented by a total of 55 items. A content validity check by expert judges resulted in ten of the original items being discarded and an additional six being created. In addition, the judges' input led to one of the domains being expanded to embrace a broader mandate and to another domain being removed.

The remaining 51 items were administered to a sample of undergraduate students, who were asked to rate the importance of the items in the context of their hometown. This pretest resulted in a reduced set of 40 items, which was formatted to solicit views on the importance of the nine issues from a sample of residents in a municipality of 45,000. The 331

useable questionnaires that were returned (40.1% response rate) were analyzed to produce a final PARRS instrument that is comprised of 36 items which measure nine potential repositioning domains.

In some contexts, a 36-item scale which has to be completed twice to measure both importance and performance elements may be too long to be practical. Hence, three alternate options are offered: (i) use of a shorter, 26-item instrument that measures all nine domains; (ii) address only those domains that an agency believes to be important in its community, rather than all nine domains; and (iii) adopt a two-stage process whereby the important domains are identified in the first stage, and the second stage investigates an agency's perceived performance, and potentially that of relevant competitors as well, on only those high priority domains.

KEYWORDS: public parks and recreation, repositioning, scale development, benefits

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Introduction

The tax revolt which emerged in the mid 1970's in the United States transformed the political landscape (Crompton, 1999a). In the previous fifty years, government spending swelled from one-tenth to one-third of United States' gross national product (Crompton & McGregor, 1994). During this period, the political emphasis was on delivering services that citizens requested. Subsequent to the onset of the tax revolt, political emphasis shifted to either reducing, or at least not raising, taxes. It was noted at the beginning of this era, "This is the new environment in which many park and recreation agencies now have to operate" (Howard & Crompton, 1980, p. 37).

One of the implications of this transformation was greater competition for available funds than in the pre-tax revolt period, since in real dollar per capita terms many local governments had fewer resources available (Crompton & McGregor, 1994). The creed of all public agencies confronted with this challenging new political environment became "doing more with less," a mantra that led many in the parks and recreation field to explore the potential of marketing techniques used by the commercial sector as a vehicle for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of their delivery of services. During the late 1970s and 1980s, the field embraced both the fundamental philosophy of marketing that "the social and economic justification for an organization's existence is the satisfaction of customer wants" (Crompton & Lamb, 1986, p. 3), and the classic set of marketing activities. This model had diffused through business organizations in the 1970s and was widely acclaimed to be a prerequisite to the long-term success of a business. However, its exclusive focus on user satisfaction does not transfer well to a public sector context.

User satisfaction, while necessary, is an inadequate indicator of the success of a park and recreation department when used alone because it does not incorporate non-users' evaluations of the agency. Most taxpayers are not frequent users of these services. Thus, many of them have difficulty understanding why they should support them (Crompton, 1999b, p. 1).

This means that, "additional resources are likely to be forthcoming only when support for the field extends beyond that of existing participants" (Crompton, 1999b, p. 1). Such support depends upon how taxpayers and their elected representatives evaluate the merits of park and recreation services compared to those of all other public services. The more favorable the comparison, the more resources will be allocated. The place that the merits of parks and recreation occupy in the minds of taxpayers and elected officials relative to their perceptions of the merits of other services competing for public tax dollars is known as the field's 'position.' Thus, positioning is concerned with influencing the place an organization holds in the minds of stakeholders relative to competitive offerings.

The concept of positioning was first articulated in the marketing field (Ries & Trout, 1986). In the past decade, it has become widely recognized as a central strategic tenet in an array of different service contexts, including business-to-business relationships (Kalafatis, Tsogas & Blankson, 2000; Webster, 1991); the marketing of hotels (Dev, Morgan & Shoemaker, 1995; Mazanec, 1995); positioning of regions or countries as tourist destinations (Botha, Crompton & Kim, 2001; Crompton, Fakeye & Lue, 1992; Gartner, 1989; Javalgi, Thomas & Rao, 1992; Uysal, Chen & Williams, 2000); charity fundraising (Hibbert, 1995); referrals to hospitals (Javalgi, Joseph & Gombeski, 1995); food services (Verma, Pullman & Goodale, 1999); and political campaigning (Ries & Trout, 1986).

The primary purpose of this article is to describe the development of a scale instrument designed to operationalize positioning in the context of public park and recreation services. To compete successfully for appropriations of public funds, park and recreation agencies will have to position their services so they address priority community concerns. The scale developed here is intended to aid agencies in identifying the issues that are deemed to be most important by residents and elected officials and which, therefore, should be the focus of an agency's repositioning efforts. The scale also could be used to measure perceptions of an agency's performance in addressing these priority issues. To provide context for implementation of the scale, this paper initially distills the fundamental principles of positioning by reviewing the marketing literature, and then delineates the relevance of positioning to public park and recreation services.

The Evolution of Positioning in Marketing

Prior to the 1970s, most consumer goods industries were product oriented. They perceived their success to be reliant on the consistent development of new products, each of which had a "unique selling proposition" (USP) (Frazer, 1983). This was defined as an innovative, differentiating physical feature or benefit that was promoted to consumers.

Technological advancements, however, permitted swift replication of product features which led to a proliferation of "me-too products" (Ries & Trout, 1986, p. 22). In response, many businesses concentrated on enhancing the company's reputation or image as a means of differentiating their products or services, rather than focusing consumers' attention on specific features of a service. Initially, there was a reliance on creative advertising which delivered persuasive messages to achieve image differentiation (Ries & Trout, 1986). However, this type of advertising quickly became pervasive as many companies adopted the same strategy. The result was communication clutter caused by a profusion of similar advertising. The me-too companies killed the image era in the same way that the me-too products had killed the USP era (Ries & Trout, 1986). There was a need for an alternative approach, and this was formulated by Ries and Trout (1986, p. 14) who suggested: "the only answer to the problems of an overcommunicated society is the positioning answer."

Positioning is now regarded as a central element of marketing (Aaker & Shansby, 1982; Hooley, Broderick & Moller, 1998; Kotler, 2000; Park, Jaworski & MacInnis, 1986; Ries & Trout, 1986; Trout, 1996). For example, Blankson and Kalafatis (2001, p. 36) state, "just as marketing has become an increasingly important element of the strategic management process, so has the concept of positioning become fundamental to the success of firms' marketing strategies." As such, the authors believe that positioning holds substantial promise for public park and recreation agencies that subscribe to a marketing orientation. Crompton and Lamb (1986) defined marketing as "a set of activities aimed at facilitating and expediting exchanges" (p.16), and as a philosophy which "holds that the social and economic justification for an organization's existence is the satisfaction of customer wants" (p. 3). These definitions about exchange and satisfaction remain applicable, but whereas an agency's exchange relationship was originally defined as being with program participants, more recent conceptualizations suggest it should be extended beyond program participants to embrace all residents and decision makers (Novatorov & Crompton, 2001a; 2001b). In this article, program participants, non-user residents, and decision makers are collectively viewed as "stakeholders."

Axioms of Positioning

Several definitions of positioning have been proposed, but three fundamental axioms are inherent in all of them. First, positions are determined not by the image that a service supplier seeks to convey, but rather by how this image is perceived in the minds of stakeholders. Ries and Trout's (1986, p. 2) early definition, which has been widely adopted, highlights this idea: "Positioning is not what you do to a product. Positioning is what you do to the mind of the prospect. That is, you position the product in the mind of the prospect." This tenet results from a realization that "meanings are not inherent in the [service] itself" (Burnett, 1993, p. 60), and that "people make their decisions based on their

individual perceptions of reality, rather than on [the marketer's] definition of that reality" (Lovelock, 1996, p. 168). For this reason, it is necessary to understand stakeholders' perspectives of both an organization's services and those of its competitors (Fill, 1999).

Successful positioning requires an understanding of which attributes are important to stakeholders. The service should be differentiated on the basis of these attributes, and then these distinctive, important qualities should be specifically communicated to stakeholders. Kotler's (2000, p. 298) commonly cited definition emphasizes manipulating the attributes of the service to create a niche in people's minds: "Positioning is the act of designing the company's offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the target market's mind." Ries and Trout (1986, p. 8) stress communicating these distinctions to stakeholders: "You have to select the material that has the best chance of getting through ... concentrate on the perceptions of the prospect." In the context of public park and recreation services, when there is an understanding of what community issues are important, the agency can amend its set of offerings and reposition them so they are perceived by stakeholders to contribute to achieving priority community goals.

A second axiom of positioning is that an agency's position is considered by stakeholders not in isolation, but rather it is perceived in relation to that of its competitors. For example, Batra, Myers and Aaker (1996, p. 191) state, "a brand's position in a consumer's mind is a relative concept, in that it refers to a comparative assessment by the consumer of how this brand is similar or different from the other brands that compete with it." Because stakeholders have a limited capacity for managing the excessive amounts of information they encounter (Bettman, 1979), they develop heuristics to aid in this process. To simplify their choices, brands are ranked based on attributes (e.g., price, quality, etc.) relevant to the buying decision. Ries and Trout (1986) use the analogy of ladders in the mind to explain this axiom. Each ladder represents a different service category and each rung on the ladder, a different brand. For example, a golfer may have a ladder for golf courses in his or her mind, and will position the public agency's course on a rung on that ladder which represents its desirability relative to other courses in the region. This ordering of different suppliers' offerings demonstrates that a service's position is in part a function of the perceived strengths and weaknesses of competitors.

Positioning, then, involves consideration of an agency's two most important publics—stakeholders and competitors. Ries and Trout (1986, p. 24) concisely summarize this idea: "To succeed in our overcommunicated society, a company must create a position in the prospect's mind, a position that takes into consideration not only a company's own strengths and weaknesses, but those of its competitors as well."

Identifying a public park and recreation agency's competitors is a challenging undertaking. A majority of the agency's funding is likely to originate from the city's general fund. Thus, a park and recreation agency

has to regard other public agencies, such as the police or economic development departments, as its "competitors." Further, elected officials are unlikely to support a park and recreation agency if its intended mission is already being accomplished by other organizations in the community. Hence, an agency's position vis-à-vis private and not-for-profit organizations also is likely to factor into funding decisions.

A third axiom of positioning is consistency. A strong position can take many years to solidify in stakeholders' minds, so consistency and tight focusing of a selected message is key over this time period. Positioning means that key service features or associations must be emphasized so that they become more salient in the minds of targeted customers. The implication of this is that it requires that other features be de-emphasized (Aaker & Shansby, 1982). Some marketers are reluctant to preclude segments of the population to whom the de-emphasized features may appeal, and instead try to appeal to a wider constituency using a relatively large number of positions. However, such a strategy is likely to result in target audiences being confused and holding a fuzzy image of the service (Batra, Myers & Aaker, 1996).

This third axiom of positioning expounded in the marketing literature implies that aspects of an agency's service offerings may have to be discontinued or demarketed in order to create the focus necessary for the desired position to resonate with stakeholders. However, this axiom may be interpreted differently in the context of public park and recreation agencies. While private companies can position their products or services to the most responsive target markets without repercussions, public agencies are required to consider the implications of their actions on equity, so positioning must be careful not to preclude servicing certain citizen groups. Crompton (1999a, p. 113) recognizes this pragmatic limitation stating: "An agency cannot immediately abandon many of its current tasks and switch those resources to strengthen its repositioning efforts. If this were done, existing clienteles would probably make a loud outcry."

Further, agencies typically offer an eclectic array of services and adopting only one or two positions across all of these services may not be realistic. Thus, if a decision is made to position park and recreation services so they contribute to alleviating juvenile crime (a major problem identified by the jurisdiction, for example), it may not be possible for the park services part of an agency's operations to contribute meaningfully to this goal. It may be possible, however, for parks to contribute to a different community priority, such as economic development, by using them to stage festivals and events that attract visitors from out-of-town. Thus, it is likely to be productive for an agency to identify multiple priority issues and to position different services from its eclectic array towards addressing those issues. In essence, this is a segmentation approach which matches potential positions for particular services with a selective set of different priority issues. This is analogous to a manufacturing company positioning each of its products, rather than positioning the company's offerings as a whole.

Table 1 summarizes the positioning tenets discussed and their implications for the delivery of public park and recreation services. The final point in the table about multidimensional scaling and importance-performance analysis is discussed in relation to implementing repositioning later in the paper.

Table 1
Relevance of Positioning Tenets to Public Park and Recreation Repositioning

Positioning Tenet	Implications for Positioning the Public Park and Recreation Agency
Positioning is fundamental to the success of organizations' marketing strategies.	Agencies practicing a marketing orientation should utilize positioning strategically.
Positions are determined by, and exist in the minds of, consumers.	Agencies should position their services to address citizens' and elected officials' primary community concerns.
Positions are considered not in isolation, but rather in relation to those of competitors.	Agencies should identify their position relative to other public agencies as well as indirect 'competitors' in the private and not-for-profit sectors.
Consistency is key to developing a position.	Agencies should assess which community issues are most important and commit to positioning their services around these over time.
Developing a distinct position in stakeholders' minds may require de-emphasizing certain aspects of the service.	Developing a small set of distinct positions in stakeholders' minds is likely to require gradually de-emphasizing or re-orienting the focus of services that cannot contribute to addressing community issues identified as important.
Multi-dimensional scaling permits comparison of competing services.	Importance-performance analysis provides a comparable but simpler alternative to multi-dimensional scaling.

Repositioning Public Park and Recreation Services

In the parks and recreation field, positioning was first advocated by Crompton (1993) who suggested it was likely to be key to agencies' efforts to compete successfully for tax dollars. Interest in the concept has gained momentum which has been accentuated by two changes in the conceptualization of leisure service delivery that have emerged in the past decade: 1) the embracing of the Benefits Approach to Leisure (BAL) (Driver, Brown & Peterson, 1991; Driver & Bruns, 1999), and 2) the challenging of the theoretical paradigm from which public sector marketing evolved (Novatorov & Crompton, 2001a; 2001b).

The BAL focuses attention on the positive outcomes that may emanate from providing leisure facilities and activities. It views the provision of recreation services and facilities as a means to an end, rather than as an end in itself. It has been suggested that "elected officials ... tend to hold the erroneous belief that most or all of the benefits of leisure accrue to the individuals who use leisure services" (Driver & Bruns, 1999, p. 351).

Most stakeholders are unaware of the social, economic, and environmental benefits which may accrue from investments in leisure. "While leisure is the leading economic sector and the most important social service sector, the scope and magnitude of the benefits of leisure are not recognized and appreciated" (Driver & Bruns, 1999, p. 351). Research findings which undergird the BAL that identify the benefits associated with leisure investments provide the grist to facilitate the repositioning of park and recreation services.

A second impetus for repositioning is the re-conceptualization of marketing in the context of public leisure services (Novatorov & Crompton, 2001a). It was noted in the introduction that the marketing model developed in commercial environments was adopted by park and recreation agencies in the 1980s and 1990s. This model posited that service provision involved a voluntary exchange between an agency and program participants; however, this ignored the reality that most public programs are funded with tax dollars rather than from participants' direct payments. Elected officials responsible for distributing tax dollars to public departments are intermediaries in this exchange process (Novatorov & Crompton, 2001b). In the commercial sector, service recipients who are delighted with the services they receive voluntarily pay a price for them which covers both their full cost of production and a profit margin. This revenue provides a company with sufficient resources to continue to provide, and perhaps to upgrade, those services. In the public sector, users may be delighted with a service. However, the cost of providing the service is likely to be subsidized by tax dollars, and if elected officials perceive other public services to be a higher priority they may opt to reduce or terminate funding for the service. The challenge for park and recreation agencies is exacerbated because in most communities a majority of taxpayers do not use a majority of public recreation programs and, thus, are unlikely to regard them as a high priority service in the community. An implication of having elected official intermediaries in the exchange process is that agencies must better communicate to stakeholders the *public* benefits emanating from investments in leisure, so that non-user taxpayers and decision makers better understand them. Repositioning explicates the link between the public benefits of recreation and the major issues confronting a community.

Three types of repositioning have been suggested—real, psychological, and competitive (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993). *Real* repositioning involves actually changing what the agency does so that its offerings are perceived to be addressing community needs. Crompton (2001, p. 7) states, "Real repositioning is the foundation upon which all action rests. An agency must not try to be something it is not. It is important that it is able to deliver the outcomes it promises."

Psychological repositioning means altering stakeholders' beliefs about what an agency currently does. This usually will involve emphasizing the scope or magnitude of the benefits that an agency's services provide. A corollary of this is that an organization could attempt to position itself as

part of a "club," and in doing so, ally itself with the services provided by members of that "club." For example, Kotler (2000) offers the example of the "Big 3" automakers, a name that was promulgated by the third-leading brand at the time. This strategy is most relevant for relatively poorly positioned services that seek to enhance their position by aligning with the market leader. For example, if it partnered with another public or community organization (real repositioning) in a particular service area (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs in youth development), then a park and recreation agency is likely to be perceived by stakeholders as more strongly contributing to addressing that issue. Aligning with other agencies or organizations that already have a firm, well-established image and position may establish the park and recreation agency as a member of the "club" of agencies that are effectively addressing the issue and provide it with a bridging point to the position it is seeking.

Finally, *competitive* repositioning means altering stakeholders' beliefs about what an agency's competitors do. Kotler (2000) notes that raising questions about a competing service's quality or authenticity can reduce consumer confidence in the market leader. Ries and Trout (1986) state that this type of repositioning can be used to create an open position that the agency then can fill. For instance, a park and recreation agency could reinforce the position that the local police force provides crime *resolution* services; emphasize that the police cannot provide effective *prevention* services; and then promote the agency as filling the community's crime prevention role. Crompton (1999a) points out that approximately only 5% of juveniles committing crimes are incarcerated. Therefore, park and recreation agencies may effectively argue that for major progress to be made, resources have to be allocated to prevention programs that target the overwhelming majority of youths committing crimes who are not arrested and incarcerated. Such competitive repositioning efforts can also be reinforced by showing citizens' desire for prevention programs in addition to incarceration or policing programs. For example, a Los Angeles Times telephone survey reported that 21% of adults surveyed felt that "more money for youth recreation and job training programs" was the best proposal for reducing crime in the United States. In contrast, the options of "adding 100,000 more police officers nationwide" and "money for more state prisons" were supported by only 13% and 3% of adults, respectively (Crompton, 1999a).

Development of a Positioning Instrument

The key to repositioning park and recreation department services effectively is for them to align with the prevailing concerns in the community. To do this, an agency has to identify those preeminent concerns and evaluate residents' current perceptions of the agency's contribution to addressing them. This requires the availability of an instrument that will enable agencies to take these actions. This section of the paper describes the steps used to develop such an instrument.

In many communities, elected officials responsible to tax-paying residents are likely to be responsive to suggested investments that contribute to the economic prosperity of the community. Crompton (2001; 2000; 1999a; 1999b) has identified ten potential repositioning domains which may be used to align park and recreation agencies with a community's economic prosperity, either through revenue generation or cost savings: attracting and retaining businesses, attracting and retaining retirees, enhancing real-estate values, attracting tourists, deriving economic benefits from trees, stimulating urban rejuvenation, expanding retail sales of equipment, preventing youth crime, improving community health, and addressing the needs of people who are underemployed. The domains of each of these ten repositioning dimensions are explicated in Table 2.

Table 2
Domains of the Ten Repositioning Dimensions

Positioning Strategy	Domain of the Dimension
Attracting Businesses	• Parks and recreation contribute to a community's quality of life • Businesses whose primary resource is highly-qualified professional employees consider park and recreation amenities important • Small businesses place a high value on park and recreation amenities in evaluating alternate locations • Park and recreation agencies should provide amenities that businesses find desirable
Attracting Retirees	• Next to climate, retirees rank park and recreation amenities as most important to relocation decisions • Attracting retirees includes providing recreation amenities that benefit existing residents (in the event of success or failure) • One of the main needs of retirees – social interaction – is a central feature of many recreation activities • Must provide recreation amenities to satisfy current retiree residents (easier than attracting new retirees; large voting block) • Retirees are a growing force in economic development
Enhancing Real-Estate Values	• Proximity to natural, non-intensive use parks and open space increases property values • Parks pay for themselves through increased property tax revenue • Parks less costly to taxpayers than residential development (both acquisition/capital and operating costs) • Parks with passive use patterns exhibit greater positive effects on property values
Attracting Tourists	• Majority of the attractions that drive pleasure travel are provided by the public sector and non-profit organizations • The park and recreation agency is the main public agency responsible for the provision of these tourist attractions • Private tourism businesses are generally limited to providing integral support services (e.g. hotels, transportation) • Economic impact studies explicate the financial return that attractions provide for residents on the tax dollars 'invested'
Deriving Economic Benefits from Trees	• Trees remove toxic chemicals from the air • Trees reduce the need for pollution-controlling devices • Trees provide shade to buildings and homes, thus decreasing the consumption of energy used to operate air conditioners • Roots and canopies of trees absorb significant volumes of rainwater • Trees reduce the need for flood-control measures

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Table 2 Continued
Domains of the Ten Repositioning Dimensions

Stimulating Urban Rejuvenation	• Recreation amenities can resurrect a previously blighted area • A mix of use patterns is beneficial to the vitality of a downtown area
Expanding Retail Equipment Sales	• Public park and recreation agency provides a majority of recreation facilities in a community • Presence of facilities creates participation opportunities • Availability of opportunities creates demand for equipment • Absence of facilities inhibits the growth potential of manufacturers and retailers of recreational equipment (job loss, tax $ lost, community recession, etc.)
Preventing Youth Crime	• Youths who participate in recreation have lower recidivism rates • Participation in recreation leads to a decline in delinquency • Youths participating in recreation experience increased self-esteem and a decreased sense of hopelessness • Recreation offers a preventative, rather than reactive, solution to youth crime • Recreation programs are substantially less expensive than policing and/or incarceration • Recreation programs reach delinquent youths who are not caught and prosecuted by the justice system • Youths are naturally drawn to recreation programs • Recreation personnel are experienced in establishing empathetic relationships with clients • Recreation programs are a positive way to fill youths' free time
Improving Community Health	• Recreation provides opportunities for citizens to increase physical fitness • Recreation provides opportunities for citizens to reduce stress • Recreation provides opportunities for citizens to reduce substance abuse • Recreation provides opportunities for citizens to meditate • Recreation provides opportunities for citizens to lessen social isolation • Parks and open space improve air quality • Recreation is a proactive approach to health care • Recreation is substantially less expensive than health care
Addressing Under-employment	• Participation in parks and recreation programs fulfills needs similar to those garnered from employment (e.g. social contact, sense of purpose, self-esteem, self-confidence, etc.) • Recreation programs can build skills for the workforce • Recreation provides a positive way to fill underemployed persons' free time

Each of these ten issues is multi-dimensional. For example, economic benefits from trees may derive from (i) their use in lowering energy costs by planting around buildings to temper both hot and cold temperature extremes in the summer and winter, respectively; (ii) alleviation of flooding by reducing stormwater run-off; and iii) alleviation of air pollution. Thus, if stakeholders are asked to give a single, overall rating to each of the ten domains, their responses are unlikely to have acceptably high levels of reliability and validity because: (i) they have not reviewed and weighed all facets of the issue in their responses and / or (ii) they have different views about different dimensions of the issue. Hence, their multi-dimensional nature requires that a multi-item scale be developed for each issue. This approach will result in an instrument that produces scores from which more valid inferences can be made than would be obtained from single-item measures (Babbie, 2001).

Development of the scale followed the multi-step procedure suggested by Churchill (1979) for developing measures of marketing constructs. This process has been employed effectively in related fields such as marketing (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988; Petrick, 2002; Zaichowsky, 1985) and tourism (Lee & Crompton, 1992).

Item Generation and Initial Content Validity Check

An initial pool of 55 items was generated from reviewing the scholarly and popular literature related to the ten repositioning domains listed above (American Forestry Association, 1992; American Forests; 1997; Backman & Backman, 1993; Blumenfeld, 1994; Crispell & Frey, 1993; Crompton, 2001; 2000; 1999a; 1999b; Crompton, Love & More, 1997; Crompton & Witt, 1997; Cuba & Longino, 1991; Decker & Crompton, 1993; 1990; Dwyer, 1993; Froelicher & Froelicher, 1991; Galbraith & DeNoble, 1988; GHASP, 1999; Glyptis, 1989; Godbey, 1993; 1991; Godbey, Graefe & James, 1993; Haigood & Crompton, 1998; Havitz & Spigner, 1993; Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993; Longino, 1995; Love & Crompton, 1993; McCarthy & Simpson, 1979; McKay, 1993; McPherson et al., 2001; 2000; 1999; Paffenberger, Hyde & Dow, 1991; Reid, 1988; Scott, McPherson & Simpson, 1998; Sessoms, 1993; Shafer, Scott & Mixon, 2000; Simpson & McPherson, 1996; Smit & Reid, 1990; Smith, 1990; Spigner & Havitz, 1992; The Davey Resource Group, 1997; Ulrich, Dimberg & Driver, 1991; Ulrich & Parsons, 1992; U.S. Department of Energy, 1993; Van der Merwe, 1987; Wolverton, 1996).

All of the items included in the initial pool were issues to which a park and recreation agency could potentially contribute. A group of eight expert judges, consisting of faculty and graduate students who were all knowledgeable in the field of community recreation, edited the initial items for content validity (Lee & Crompton, 1992; Petrick, 2002; Zaichowsky, 1985). These expert judges were asked to assess the relevance of each item by rating it as "clearly relevant," "somewhat relevant," or "not relevant" to a park and recreation agency's repositioning efforts, to suggest new items, and to assign each item to one of the ten domains described in Table 2 that were used as a framework for developing the items.

A series of decision rules was used to filter items to be included in the pretest scale. In total, 45 of the 55 initial items were retained and six new items were suggested by the judges and accepted by the researchers. Based on the suggestion of several judges, the original "deriving benefits from trees" domain was expanded to embrace the broader mandate of "environmental stewardship," and two of the new items reflected this broader focus. None of the items that were a priori conceptualized as belonging to the "expanding retail sales of equipment" domain were accepted by the judges, so this domain was removed from the scale.

Pretest of the Instrument

To examine the dimensionality and internal consistency of the 51 scale items emerging from the first stage, the instrument was administered to a

convenience sample of 281 undergraduate students who were asked to complete the instrument in the context of the importance of the issues in their hometown. Although students were not the population to whom the scale would eventually be administered, it has been suggested that using such a homogeneous sample provides a rigorous evaluation of the scale because the variance contributed by intervening variables is reduced (Calder, Phillips & Tybout, 1982; Mitchell & Bates, 1998).

Data from this pretest sample were used to purify the scale. Churchill (1979, p. 68) noted "coefficient alpha absolutely should be the first measure one calculates to assess the quality of the instrument." Accordingly, coefficient alpha was examined for each of the a *priori* domains, and decisions related to the removal of particular items were informed by an item's corrected item-to-total correlation (less than .50) and potential improvements in the domain's alpha if the item were deleted (Mo, Howard & Havitz, 1993; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988). As a result of these procedures, 11 of the 51 items were deleted. The alphas for the nine domains containing the 40 remaining items ranged from .70 to .83. Thus, all of the alphas met the recommended minimum of .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

The instrument was tested by administering it to a sample of community residents, which was the population for whom the scale was designed. The chosen study setting was the city of Grapevine, Texas, which had a population of 45,000 and a wide range of recreation and park facilities. With the assistance of the parks and recreation department, a sample of 900 respondents was systematically drawn from the 17,194 households in the city.

A modified Dillman technique (Dillman, 2000) was used to collect data from the sample, which involved three mailings spaced two weeks apart and a reminder postcard sent three days after the initial mailing. Each mailing included a personalized cover letter signed by the director of the city's parks and recreation department, the questionnaire, and a postage-paid return envelope. The questionnaire consisted of four main sections. Two sections consisted of single items addressing the overall importance and performance attributed to each of the nine repositioning dimensions, while the other two sections were comprised of the 40 importance and performance scale items.

A primary concern to be addressed was the definition and wording of the importance statements because importance has multiple meanings to people (Jaccard, Brinberg & Ackerman, 1986; Lego & Shaw, 1992). There were several options available from which to select a rubric to precede the importance items. The first possibility was a phrase such as "Park and recreation services are important because they help to ... (prevent youth crime, etc.)" with an agree / disagree scale response format. This rubric assumes that respondents are knowledgeable about the potential social, economic and environmental contributions that park and recreation ser-

vices can make towards given community issues. By using this rubric, respondents are agreeing or disagreeing with the importance of alternate-roles of park and recreation services, rather than rating the importance of the community issue.

An alternative rubric could be: "The park and recreation department should focus on ... (preventing youth crime, etc.)." Although this phrase better addresses respondents' expectations of an agency, like the first rubric it assumes respondents understand the potentially wide-ranging contributions of park and recreation services. Respondents are likely to indicate support only for initiatives that reflect benefits they associate with parks and recreation (e.g., improving community health, preventing youth crime, etc.). They are unlikely to support initiatives focusing on issues which, because of their limited knowledge base, they perceive to be outside the capacity of a park and recreation department to impact (e.g., attracting businesses, stimulating urban rejuvenation, etc.). This type of expectations statement is appropriate only when respondents possess comprehensive knowledge about the array of potential contributions an agency could make.

The importance rubric that was used to identify the issues that were most important to stakeholders was: "In Grapevine, preventing youth crime is ... ." The response categories ranged from "not at all important" to "very important" on a seven point scale. No mention of the park and recreation department's role was made or implied in this rubric, which focused exclusively on how important the issues were to residents in the community. The performance items subsequently measured perceptions of the park and recreation department's contributions to these same issues, using a seven-point scale ranging from "very small" to "very large."

This approach enabled the agency to ascertain which community issues should be given priority. Many of the items included in the scale were issues not traditionally associated with parks and recreation, so it was anticipated that stakeholders' ratings of the agency's performance on certain items would be fairly low. This rubric, however, provides a lucid depiction of the importance citizens and elected officials attribute to various community issues, without requiring them to understand how parks and recreation fit into the equation. The burden is then on the agency to communicate to these stakeholders its potential for effectively addressing the important issues, using real, psychological, and competitive repositioning.

A total of 331 useable questionnaires were returned and the effective response rate, excluding non-deliverables, was 40.1%. This is somewhat lower than the 55% response rate that Crompton and Tian-Cole (1999) suggest might be expected from samples of general populations whose interest in parks and recreation is unknown. This outcome may be attributable to the substantial length of the questionnaire, which was required for the initial purposes of developing and validating the scale. Despite the lower-than-expected response rate, the potential for non-response bias was not evaluated because the purpose of the study was to demonstrate the

instrument's internal dimensionality, reliability and validity, rather than to provide results that were representative of a particular population.

Testing the Scale's Dimensionality

To assess the scale's dimensionality, each item's corrected item-to-total correlation was examined, together with the effect of deleting an item on each domain's coefficient alpha. Coefficient alpha indicates the degree to which a set of items share a common core (Cronbach, 1951). An item's corrected item-to-total correlation indicates the extent of the correlation between the score on the item and the sum of scores on all *other* items making up the dimension to which the item belongs (Parasuraman et al., 1988). For these tests, only the importance data were examined because accurately gauging the importance of community issues was the overriding imperative.

When alphas for each of the nine importance domains were calculated using the data obtained from the sample of residents, only one domain's alpha, that for attracting and retaining businesses (.68), failed to meet the minimum reliability criterion of .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). However, further analysis revealed relatively low corrected item-to-total correlations (less than .50) for several items and that deleting these items from their respective domains would improve the coefficient alpha for that dimension. Items that were removed based on these two criteria are described below.

Within the attracting and retaining businesses domain, "*using landscaping to beautify public areas*" demonstrated a corrected item-to-total correlation of only .32 and deleting this item elevated the domain's coefficient alpha from .62 to .66. Within the environmental stewardship domain, "*reducing the amount of money the city must spend on controlling pollution*" exhibited an item-to-total correlation of only .25 and the coefficient alpha for its domain increased from .76 to .81 when this item was deleted. Within the attracting and retaining retirees domain, "*encouraging wealthy retirees to settle in this community to improve the tax base*" had an item-to-total correlation of .39 and deleting this item improved the coefficient alpha for its domain from .85 to .91. Finally, within the stimulating urban rejuvenation domain, "*redeveloping facilities in run down areas*" demonstrated a corrected item-to-total correlation of .50, but its removal from the dimension improved the alpha from .80 to .82.

These procedures resulted in 36 items being retained representing nine repositioning domains, to form the Park and Recreation Repositioning Scale (PARRS). With the exception of the attracting and retaining businesses importance domain which had an alpha of .66, the coefficient values for all of the domains ranged from .78 to .91 (Table 3). The recommended minimum reliability standard is .70, but for two-item scales (e.g., the attracting and retaining businesses domain), an alpha coefficient as low as .50 is acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Therefore, each of the domains was deemed to possess the necessary degree of internal consistency.

Table 3
Coefficient Alphas and Construct Validity Correlations for Final PARRS Dimensions

Dimension and Items	Coefficient Alpha	Construct Validity Correlation
Preventing Youth Crime	.89	.54
helping youth to develop into productive citizens		
reducing the rate of repeat offenses by young offenders		
providing positive role models for adolescents		
providing youth with positive ways to fill their free time		
increasing the self-esteem of teenagers in the community		
Environmental Stewardship	.81	.54
improving the quality of groundwater		
preventing erosion and flooding		
improving air quality		
protecting environmentally sensitive areas		
reducing the amount of energy consumed by residents		
Enhancing Real Estate Values	.78	.31
ensuring there is open green space near every home		
ensuring that parks are easily accessible to residents from their homes		
keeping neighborhood parks well-maintained		
requiring that developers provide park space for people in their developments		
providing trails so that people can walk or bike to work		
Attracting and Retaining Businesses	.66	.48
convincing businesses to locate in this community		
encouraging executives and professionals to live in this community		
Improving Community Health	.85	.56
providing opportunities for residents to increase their physical fitness		
supporting and working with community health organizations		
helping people build healthy lifestyles		
educating residents on the benefits of physical activity		
Attracting and Retaining Retirees	.91	.55
providing amenities in the community that older adults want		
encouraging senior citizens to become involved with the community		
designing programs specifically for older adults		
providing programs at which retired people can socialize together		
Stimulating Urban Rejuvenation	.82	.64
ensuring that the heart of the city is prosperous		
revitalizing the community's downtown area		
developing new facilities in the core of the city		
Attracting Tourists	.88	.69
getting tourists to spend money in the community		
hosting events that bring tourism revenue to local businesses		
developing attractions that draw people from other cities		
developing travel packages for visitors to the city		
Addressing the Needs of People who are Underemployed	.89	.62
helping adults build skills that can be used in the workforce		
offering programs that meet the needs of people who are unemployed		
supporting and working with community welfare and employment agencies		
providing programs to lower income people at a reduced or no charge		

Testing the Scale's Validity

Content validity indicates the adequacy with which the domain of a characteristic is captured by the measure (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002). Although content validity is mainly a matter of judgment (Parasuraman, 1991), it can be accomplished by formulating "a large collection of items that broadly represent the variable" (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002, p. 409) and by including items from all the relevant dimensions of the variable. Further, DeVellis (1991) suggests having colleagues familiar with the context of the study review the initial list of items and suggest content areas that have been omitted but which should be included. Each of these recommendations was followed through the literature review and the expert judges procedures that were adopted. The content representativeness of the domains to the larger construct of repositioning was also addressed in that each of the nine domains in the scale are viable strategies around which an agency could position its services. However, although these were the only repositioning strategies the authors could foresee, it is recognized that other domains may exist in which case they could be added to the scale.

Demonstrating construct validity involves confirming that the instrument is in fact measuring what it purports to measure (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002). More specifically, it is an integrated judgment about the extent to which inferences about individuals' status on a construct is appropriate given a test score (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). To assess the overall importance residents attributed to each of the repositioning domains, respondents were asked to complete an additional, nine-item scale that was included in the questionnaire. The means of responses to each of these single item scales were correlated with the mean of responses to the set of items within the corresponding factor to derive a measure of construct validity. For example, responses to "In community X, enhancing real estate values is ... not at all important (1) through extremely important (7)" were correlated to the mean of responses to the five items representing this dimension found on the multi-dimensional importance scale. The level of correlation between these two means provided some indication of how well the items within a domain captured the overall importance attributed to that domain.

Each of these correlations was highly significant ($p<.001$), and, with the exception of the enhancing real estate values dimension which had a correlation of .31, all exceeded a value of .45 (Table 3). These results are comparable with the correlations reported by other scale developers who have used this approach to demonstrate construct validity (Petrick, 2002; Zaichowsky, 1985). Each domain correlated more strongly with its corresponding single-item importance measure than it did with the single-item measure for any other domain. Overall, these positive and significant correlations provided evidence of the scale's construct validity.

Discussion

The PARRS instrument developed here provides researchers and agency managers with a valuable tool for formulating a repositioning strategy. The items can be formatted into two iterative scales measuring both importance of the issues in the community and perceptions of the agency's contributions to addressing those issues. Residents' ratings can then be plotted on an importance-performance analysis (IPA) grid (Guadagnolo, 1985; Martilla & James, 1977) to identify the most productive issue(s) around which to reposition the park and recreation department's services. Once this first grid has been examined, a subsequent grid(s) could then be created comparing ratings of the agency with those of other agencies or organizations in the jurisdiction which also address that priority issue. This two-step process of importance-performance analyses and its implications are discussed by the authors elsewhere (Kaczynski and Crompton, in press). Hunt, Scott and Richardson (2003) also provide a practical example of repositioning using importance-performance analysis in the context of public park and recreation services.

Although most empirically-based attempts at positioning in the marketing literature generally use multi-dimensional scaling (MSD) (Batra, Myers & Aaker, 1996; Bigne, Vila-Lopez & Kuster-Boluda, 2000; Carroll & Green, 1997; Cooper, 1983; Doyle, 1975; Green, Carmone Jr. & Smith, 1989; Van Auken & Lonial, 1991), in the context of parks and recreation, IPA provides a simpler and more descriptive alternative to MDS. In an example of MDS, attributes such as clean water, friendly staff, sanitary changing rooms, and value for money would form the multiple dimensions along which competing aquatic facilities could be compared. However, in the context of park and recreation repositioning, only two dimensions—importance of the issue and performance of the agency—are needed to facilitate comparisons of community issues that could form the basis of an agency's position. Another limitation of MDS is that it plots only perceptions of performance, whereas IPA provides agency managers with an assessment of which community issues are most important, along with perceptions of the extent to which community organizations contribute to addressing those issues.

Scale Application Alternatives

The 36-item scale measures nine potential repositioning domains. Each of the items has been included because it contributes to the reliability, internal consistency, and validity of a domain. Nonetheless, respondents are likely to experience some degree of fatigue in completing a scale of this length. This fatigue element is exacerbated by the necessity to complete both the importance and performance scales, and may have contributed to the rather low response rate attained in this study. Consequently, park and recreation agencies may wish to administer a shortened version of the scale when measuring their constituents' opinions.

Three options are available for formulating a shortened instrument. The first option involves simply removing a certain number of items from each domain. Retaining the two attracting businesses items and selecting three items for each of the other eight domains would result in a 26-item instrument.

Following this guideline, a recommended shortened instrument is presented in Table 4. The content of the stimulating urban rejuvenation and the attracting businesses domains is unchanged because these domains already contained only two and three items, respectively. However, for domains with more than three indicators, the selection of a set of three items was based on retaining those that were most internally consistent and thereby produced the highest value for coefficient alpha. When the reliability coefficients were comparable for alternative sets of three items,

Table 4
Coefficient Alpha and Construct Validity Correlations for Shortened PARRS Dimensions

Dimension and Items	Coefficient Alpha	Construct Validity Correlation
Preventing Youth Crime providing positive role models for adolescents helping youth to develop into productive citizens providing youth with positive ways to fill their free time	.85	.52
Environmental Stewardship improving air quality reducing the amount of energy consumed by residents protecting environmentally sensitive areas	.74	.58
Enhancing Real Estate Values requiring that developers provide park space for people in their developments ensuring that parks are easily accessible to residents from their homes keeping neighborhood parks well-maintained	.70	.28
Attracting and Retaining Businesses encouraging executives and professionals to live in this community convincing businesses to locate in this community	.66	.48
Improving Community Health educating residents on the benefits of physical activity helping people build healthy lifestyles supporting and working with community health organizations	.84	.58
Attracting and Retaining Retirees providing programs at which retired people can socialize together designing programs specifically for older adults encouraging senior citizens to become involved with the community	.90	.53
Stimulating Urban Rejuvenation revitalizing the community's downtown area ensuring that the heart of the city is prosperous developing new facilities in the core of the city	.82	.64
Attracting Tourists developing attractions that draw people from other cities getting tourists to spend money in the community hosting events that bring tourism revenue to local businesses	.88	.68
Addressing the Needs of People who are Underemployed offering programs that meet the needs of people who are unemployed supporting and working with community welfare and employment agencies helping adults build skills that can be used in the workforce	.88	.62

the authors selected the set that they deemed best explicated the dimensions of the domain, thereby maintaining the greatest degree of content validity. The alphas for the two or three-item importance domains are shown in Table 4. With the exception of the attracting and retaining businesses domain alpha which was unchanged, the alphas of each of the abridged domains exceeded the recommended minimum of .70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

Table 4 also shows the correlations between each of the domains in the shortened instrument and their respective one-item importance ratings. These ranged from .28 to .68 and the values are similar to those reported when all of the domain's items were used to compute the factor grand mean. All of the correlations are again significant, indicating that each of these abridged domains possesses strong construct validity.

In addition, paired samples t-tests were used to compare the grand means of the reduced item domains with those of the full domains. Difference tests were not possible for attracting and retaining businesses and stimulating urban rejuvenation because the content of these domains was unchanged. Among the seven remaining comparisons that were possible, five were significant ($p<.01$), indicating that the two instruments produced somewhat different results. However, the absolute differences between each pair of significantly different grand means were relatively small ranging from .06 to .23 (on the 7-point scale). Such a small difference only minimally alters the placement of the domain on an importance-performance (I-P) grid, and is unlikely to change the implications for repositioning that an I-P analysis suggests. These results suggest that an agency can use this shortened instrument with confidence if it needs an instrument that allows managers to assess stakeholders' perceptions on *all* of the potential repositioning issues.

A second option for reducing the length of the instrument is to include items from a smaller set of domains. If an agency was confident that a particular issue(s) was unimportant in its jurisdiction, it would be futile to develop a repositioning strategy around that community concern. Further, gauging the agency's current performance on the issue would be fruitless. Consequently, when the instrument is administered to residents or elected officials, an agency will likely exclude items representing irrelevant repositioning domains. For example, if the agency is certain that stakeholders do not perceive unemployment (4 items) and youth crime (5 items) to be pervasive community concerns, excluding these domains might be appropriate. Such an action would shorten the instrument to a more manageable length of only 27 items.

A final option for reducing the instrument's length involves a two-stage process. The first stage would involve measuring only the importance that residents attribute to the nine dimensions. A subsequent questionnaire would be confined to investigating perceptions of the agency's performance, as well as that of competing public and community agencies, on only those issues found to be important in the first stage and around which

the agency believed it could feasibly develop a repositioning strategy. Hence, this second instrument would address the agency's performance on only a few domains, and would require that competitor sections be included for only that limited set of important issues.

Concluding Comments

Over the past decade, there has been growing recognition that positioning may be key to a public park and recreation agency's ability to maintain or increase its level of tax support. Recent shifts in the conceptualization of leisure services embracing the Benefits Approach to Leisure and revising the theoretical paradigm from which public sector marketing evolved have provided momentum for the centrality of positioning to an agency's marketing efforts.

This article has reviewed the fundamental tenets of positioning as they have emerged in the consumer behavior literature. Most of these ideas are relevant and adaptable to a public park and recreation setting. One exception is that a park and recreation agency has to be cautious in discontinuing or demarketing offerings, which has been suggested in the consumer behavior literature as necessary for successful positioning. Only those services in the agency's eclectic array that are not perceived as contributing to an important priority community issue can be viewed as candidates for incremental resource reduction. This multiple position approach reduces the *present* need to withdraw funding or support from existing programs, thereby minimizing the ire of groups who use the agency's services. However, over time, the agency should aim to incrementally retrench any services that cannot contribute to addressing the community concerns identified as most important. This will allow it to focus its mission around a selective set of priority issues, thereby solidifying its position for public funding.

Future applications of the scale will enable the items and domains in the PARRS to be confirmed and refined. A specific effort should be made to better explicate the attracting and retaining businesses domain since it currently contains only two items. The scale's reliability needs to be assessed over time by using a test-retest measure which requires respondents to complete the instrument twice with a period of two to four weeks between administrations. Attitudes, such as those towards the importance of community issues, are likely to be entrenched and are unlikely to change over such a short time period (Parasuraman, 1991).

Another future task is to assess the instrument's criterion-related (or predictive) validity, which relates the measurements obtained from a scale to some external criterion (Babbie, 2001). Confidence in the PARRS would be enhanced if the premises underlying repositioning were verified. The assertion that an increase in an agency's share of public resources will occur as a result of addressing an important community issue and doing so more effectively than competitors appears to be conceptually sound, but this has not been verified by empirical research.

Studies are needed that put repositioning into action and then measure the results. Optimally, this would involve a longitudinal study design in which a municipal agency's efforts and rewards are tracked throughout the repositioning process. More practically, however, repositioning could be operationalized in an experimental setting. For example, participants' initial perceptions of the importance of community issues and the park and recreation agency's contributions to these issues could be investigated by administering the PARRS. Additional sections could also address the contributions of public agency 'competitors.' Subjects could then be exposed to alternate repositioning messages that pertain to the issue they rated as most important, and again asked to complete the scales rating each agency. Participants' changes in attitudes toward the public agency competitors and their willingness to allocate tax dollars to the park and recreation department relative to other public agencies could be examined before and after the administration of the hypothetical agency communications. Similar experimental designs employing informational treatments have been used effectively in other recreation settings to influence changes in participants' attitudes and behaviors (Gramann, Bonifield & Kim, 1995; McCarville, Crompton & Sell, 1993). Comparable research would be invaluable for explicating the relationship between repositioning and increased agency funding.

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