

An operational tool for determining the optimum repositioning strategy for leisure service departments

Andrew T. Kaczynski and John L. Crompton

Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, Texas A&M University, 2261 TAMU, College Station, Texas 77843-2261, USA

A sample of 331 residents of Grapevine, Texas, responded to an instrument designed to assess their perspectives of the priority issues related to economic development in their community. The instrument also assessed the parks and recreation department's contributions to these issues, and compared them with those of the police department in the area of preventing youth crime. The data were used to suggest a repositioning strategy for the city's parks and recreation department. The instrumentation and processes used in this case study are designed to offer a generalizable operational tool for leisure service agencies to use to determine an optimal repositioning strategy.

INTRODUCTION

In response to declining tax revenues that shaped the political landscape in the late 1970s, many leisure service agencies in the United States adapted private sector business practices to the delivery of their services. Part of this shift was the embracing of a marketing orientation with a primary goal of providing user satisfaction (Crompton and Lamb, 1986). Demonstrating achievement of this mission traditionally has been regarded as the primary means for securing sustained or increased tax allocations.

However, because a majority of constituents do not use their services, leisure service agencies are perceived by many taxpayers and elected officials as providing primarily 'private' benefits, i.e. those which accrue only to the users of services. Consequently, many residents are ambivalent to the use of public tax dollars to fund an agency's programs. Crompton (1999b) summarizes these sentiments in stating, 'additional resources are likely to be forthcoming only

when support for the field extends beyond that of existing participants' (p. 1). Similarly, Glyptis (1989) suggested that the provision of leisure for its own sake still lacks political clout; it has to show other more tangible returns to be worth funding. Thus, the emphasis on securing additional resources has shifted from satisfying users to demonstrating to all residents, most of whom are non-users, that they benefit from park and recreation services. This shift implies that these services must be repositioned in the minds of taxpayers and elected officials as 'public' services from which everybody benefits, rather than as 'private' services from which only users benefit.

This approach shifts the emphasis when ascertaining service priorities, away from users towards benefits accruing to the general population. Users, however, are likely to play a prominent role in securing agency resources because invariably they are the primary advocates, fundraisers and 'infantry' in referendum campaigns. (In the US, most

local agencies have no authority to spend money on any capital projects without the approval from a majority of local voters in a referendum on the issue. In some jurisdictions, voter approval is also required for an agency's annual operating budget). Hence, there are strong political as well as moral reasons for reducing any adverse impacts on existing users which may arise from shifting resources associated with repositioning. Techniques for doing this have been described elsewhere (Crompton, 1984, 1988).

Positioning refers to the place an agency holds in the minds of stakeholders relative to competitive offerings. The central tenet of positioning is that agencies do not position services, stakeholders do (Ries and Trout, 1986). It is not the images created by competing public agencies that matter, but rather how stakeholders, including citizens and elected officials, perceive such positions. The use of repositioning in public parks and recreation is aimed at changing these groups' perceptions of the degree to which the agency and its competitors contribute to important community issues (Crompton, 2000a).

The trend towards repositioning has been spurred by two dramatic changes in the conceptualization of public park and recreation services. The first is the push for the adoption of a Benefits Approach to Leisure (Driver and Bruns, 1999). The Benefits Approach to Leisure (BAL) focuses the attention of managers and researchers on the positive outcomes that can be obtained from leisure. It views the provision of recreation programmes and services as a means to an end, rather than as a private benefit or an end in themselves. The authors of the BAL recognize 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 and Bruns, 1999, p. 351). The BAL's approach offers a vehicle for repositioning agencies so that taxpayers and elected officials recognize

the valuable contributions their services make to the entire community.

A second impetus for the trend towards repositioning is the recent re-conceptualization of marketing in the context of public leisure services (Novatorov and Crompton, 2001a, b). The marketing model developed for organization operating in commercial environments, which was widely adopted by park and recreation agencies in the early 1980s, posited that service delivery involved a voluntary exchange between an agency and citizen participants. In contrast, the reconceptualization recognizes that most of an agency's funding comes from taxes rather than participants' fees and, consequently, the intermediary role of elected officials is central to the exchange process. Elected officials stand on platforms which address their constituents' primary concerns. When in office, they are expected to prioritize resources so as to alleviate these concerns. Hence, to secure funding, leisure service agencies have to demonstrate they can contribute to this end.

The purpose of this study was to identify an optimum repositioning strateg(ies) for the Grapevine Parks and Recreation Department. Three types of repositioning have been suggested for public entities (Kotler *et al.*, 1993).

Real repositioning involves actually changing what an agency does so its offerings are perceived to be addressing community needs. Crompton (2001) 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' (p. 7).

Psychological repositioning means altering stakeholders' beliefs about what an agency currently does. This usually will involve communicating the scope or magnitude of the public benefits that an agency's services provide.

Finally, *competitive* repositioning means

altering stakeholders' beliefs about what an agency's competitors do.

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 (Kotler, 2000; Ries and Trout, 1986). For this reason, it is necessary to understand stakeholders' perspectives of an organization's services (Fill, 1999). To merit increased tax allocations, a park and recreation agency must be regarded as a significant contributor to addressing community concerns. 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 be achieving this goal.

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 (Batra *et al.*, 1996). Ries and Trout (1986) use the analogy of ladders in the mind to explain this axiom. Each ladder represents a different service category (e.g. golf courses) and each rung on the ladder, a different service provider. 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.

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. 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 and Shansby, 1982). Although an agency should focus its repositioning efforts around a selec-

tive set of priority community issues, it would likely be counterproductive to demarket or terminate established programmes. 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 both equity and on politically influential user groups so positioning must be careful not to preclude servicing certain citizen groups. Crompton (1999a) 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 clientele would probably make a loud outcry' (p. 113).

Further, agencies typically offer an eclectic array of services so adopting a single position across all of these services may not be realistic. Thus, it is likely that an agency will identify more than one priority issue and 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 select set of priority issues. This is somewhat analogous to a manufacturing company positioning each of its products, rather than positioning the company's offerings as a whole.

The key to effectively repositioning park and recreation department services is for them to align with the prevailing concerns in the community. 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. Nine means by which a park and recreation agency can contribute to economic concerns, either through revenue generation or cost-savings, have been suggested (Crompton, 1999a and b, 2000, 2001).¹ They were the repositioning dimensions considered in this study and consist of: attracting

and retaining businesses, attracting and retaining retirees, enhancing real-estate values, attracting tourists, environmental stewardship, stimulating urban rejuvenation, preventing youth crime, improving community health and addressing the needs of people who are underemployed.

Sampling and data collection procedures

The study was undertaken in the City of Grapevine, a municipality of approximately 45,000 people, located on the northwest edge of Dallas, Texas. The City of Grapevine Parks and Recreation Department (GPARD) operates and maintains a community activities centre, a senior activities centre, two swimming pools, and over 700 acres of parkland, and these facilities and the department's programs are managed through eight divisions: Administration, Senior Citizens, Parks, Recreation, Aquatics, Athletics, Recreation Programming and Community Activities Center. There were 11,303 homes and 5,891 apartments in Grapevine, and a sample of 900 respondents was systematically drawn from this sampling frame.

A modified Dillman technique (Dillman, 2000) was used to collect data from these households. Initially, each of the sample households was mailed a survey package comprised of a personalized cover letter signed by the Director of the GPARD and a questionnaire. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was provided in which to return the questionnaire. Three days after the initial mailing, each home was mailed a reminder postcard asking its residents to complete and return the previously mailed questionnaire and thanking them if they had already done so. Two weeks after the initial mailing, an amended cover letter and the questionnaire were mailed to those who had not yet responded. A final mailing of another revised cover letter with the questionnaire was undertaken two weeks after the second full mailing.

A total of 339 questionnaires were returned

out of the 900 that were originally mailed. Of these, 331 questionnaires were useable. An additional 66 questionnaires were returned by the postal service as undeliverable. Excluding these non-deliverables resulted in an effective response rate of 40.1%. The useable questionnaires were evenly divided among males and females. Respondents' ages ranged from 22 to 85 years with an average age of 46.6 years, which is fairly representative of the city's adult population. Respondents to the questionnaire had lived in Grapevine between 0.5 and 75 years, with a mean of 11.0 years lived in the city. No data were available on the length of time lived in the city for the entire population of Grapevine residents.

Instrumentation

The instrument mailed to residents consisted of two iterative scales comprised of 36 items representing the nine repositioning dimensions (see Table 1). The first scale measured respondents' attitudes towards the importance of the various community issues. The rubric for the importance scale items was 'In Grapevine'. Respondents then rated each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) 'not at all important' to (7) 'extremely important'. For example, a complete item would read, 'In Grapevine, improving air quality is' not at all important through extremely important. No mention of parks and recreation was made when measuring the importance of the issues because although each item included in the scale was an issue GPARD could address, it is unlikely that residents would comprehend this.

Thus, if the survey had asked about the importance of *parks and recreation* in addressing each of the issues, residents likely would have given high ratings for only those issues they associated with parks and recreation. Use of the generic importance rubric provided a clearer picture of which concerns were of greatest priority, without requiring that residents understand the potentially

Table 1 Means and confidence intervals of repositioning dimensions and individual items

Dimension and Items	Importance Mean	Confidence Interval	Performance Mean	Confidence Interval
Preventing Youth Crime	5.96	(5.84, 6.07)	4.79	(4.63, 4.92)
helping youth to develop into productive citizens	6.21		5.12	
reducing the rate of repeat offenses by young offenders	6.02		4.32	
providing positive role models for adolescents	5.90		4.64	
providing youth with positive ways to fill their free time	5.98		5.22	
increasing the self-esteem of teenagers in the community	5.70		4.61	
Environmental Stewardship	5.74	(5.63, 5.83)	4.69	(4.55, 4.81)
improving the quality of groundwater	6.01		4.77	
preventing erosion and flooding	5.85		4.97	
improving air quality	5.81		4.60	
protecting environmentally sensitive areas	5.74		5.08	
reducing the amount of energy consumed by residents	5.27		4.01	
Enhancing Real Estate Values	5.71	(5.61, 5.80)	5.22	(5.10, 5.34)
ensuring there is open green space near every home	6.29		5.89	
ensuring that parks are easily accessible to residents from their homes	5.64		4.83	
keeping neighborhood parks well-maintained	5.59		5.30	
requiring that developers provide park space for people in their developments	5.44		4.70	
providing trails so that people can walk or bike to work	5.19		4.84	
Attracting and Retaining Businesses	5.36	(5.22, 5.48)	4.50	(4.35, 4.64)
convincing businesses to locate in this community	5.41		4.61	
encouraging executives and professionals to live in this community	5.30		4.39	
Improving Community Health	5.32	(5.19, 5.42)	5.02	(4.90, 5.14)
providing opportunities for residents to increase their physical fitness	5.75		5.54	
supporting and working with community health organizations	5.37		4.67	
helping people build healthy lifestyles	5.18		5.05	
educating residents on the benefits of physical activity	4.96		4.83	

Table 1 Continued

Dimension and Items	Importance Mean	Confidence Interval	Performance Mean	Confidence Interval
Attracting and Retaining Retirees	5.18	(5.06, 5.30)	4.84	(4.70, 4.97)
providing amenities in the community that older adults want	5.24		4.70	
encouraging senior citizens to become involved with the community	5.24		4.70	
designing programs specifically for older adults	5.23		4.82	
providing programs at which retired people can socialize together	4.97		4.82	
Stimulating Urban Rejuvenation	5.17	(5.06, 5.29)	4.75	(4.61, 4.89)
ensuring that the heart of the city is prosperous	5.53		4.74	
revitalizing the community's downtown area	5.17		4.88	
developing new facilities in the core of the city	4.85		4.64	
Attracting Tourists	4.82	(4.69, 4.96)	4.69	(4.55, 4.82)
getting tourists to spend money in the community	5.32		4.75	
hosting events that bring tourism revenue to local businesses	5.04		4.93	
developing attractions that draw people from other cities	4.83		4.95	
developing travel packages for visitors to the city	4.15		4.13	
Addressing the Needs of People who are Underemployed	4.70	(4.54, 4.85)	3.97	(3.83, 4.11)
helping adults build skills that can be used in the workforce	4.87		4.00	
offering programs that meet the needs of people who are unemployed	4.69		3.87	
supporting and working with community welfare and employment agencies	4.67		4.00	
providing programs to lower income people at a reduced or no charge	4.59		4.03	

wide-ranging impacts of parks and recreation. GPARD then bears the responsibility for repositioning its services around these important issue(s) by educating stakeholders about their significant contributions.

The second scale investigated perceptions of the GPARD's performance on the same 36 items. The rubric read 'The Grapevine Parks

and Recreation Department's contribution to', and this was followed by the items and a rating scale for each ranging from (1) 'very small' to (7) 'very large'.

RESULTS

The grand means for each importance and performance dimension and their respective

items are shown in Table 1. The dimensions and items within dimensions are listed in order of residents' importance ratings. Each importance and performance factor exceeded the minimum acceptable criterion for coefficient alpha (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994) and had significant construct validity correlations ($p < 0.001$).

Information obtained from the scales was summarized and interpreted using importance-performance analysis (IPA) (Martilla and James, 1977). Using this technique, the mean importance and performance ratings are plotted on a two-dimensional grid which is comprised of four quadrants that each suggest different management actions relating to the allocation of resources (see Figure 1). The quadrant with high importance and high performance ratings, labelled 'keep up the good work', suggests resource levels allocated to address community issues in this section should be maintained. For those issues that fall in the low importance, high performance quadrant, titled 'possible overkill', resources may be retrenched. Community concerns in the low importance, low performance quadrant are designated 'low priority' and merit little attention.

Finally, when an issue is perceived as being high in importance but an agency's performance in addressing it is substandard, the suggested management strategy is to 'concentrate here'.

Using the importance and performance grand means, each issue was located on the IP grid, and then its respective confidence interval was plotted in the direction of both axes to form a 'crosspoint'. Plotting the confidence interval in addition to the grand mean increases the validity of conclusions about whether an issue falls within a distinct quadrant of the IP grid (Tarrant and Smith, 2002). An issue's placement in a specific quadrant determines the resource allocation strategy that is recommended, so examination of whether the issue's crosspoint actually overlaps one or more axes is crucial.

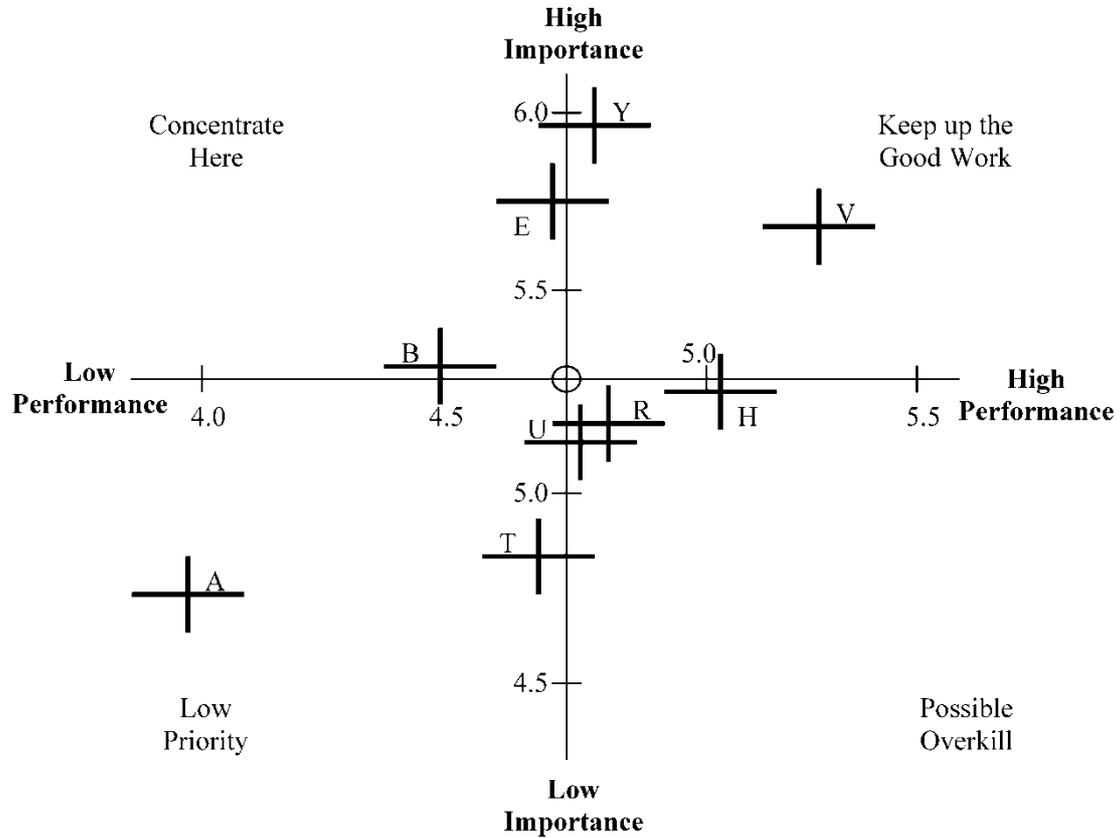
The axes, or crosshairs, of the IP grid were located using the grand means of the means of all nine importance and performance dimensions. Based on the ratings of Grapevine residents, the grand mean of the nine importance dimensions was calculated to be 5.33, and this is where the vertical axis is intersected by the horizontal axis. The grand mean of the performance dimensions was 4.73, and this is where the horizontal axis is intersected by the vertical axis (Figure 1).

The alternative option to using the grand means of the importance and performance dimensions was to have the axes intersect each other at the midpoint of the scale (i.e. 4 on the 7-point scale). Using the scale's midpoint would be appropriate if the objective was to measure importance and performance scores against some *absolute* criterion (Martilla and James, 1977; Tarrant and Smith, 2002). However, for purposes of repositioning, using the grand mean of the issues being plotted is more prudent because the *relative* importance or performance of the issues is what is being compared (Martilla and James, 1977). IPA helps the user make resource allocation decisions based on the placement of issues within the grid.

In this study, all of the issues were rated higher than 4.0 in importance, so if the scale midpoint had been used to place the axes, all of the dimensions would have been deemed important because they would have fallen in the top two quadrants of the grid. This would offer little assistance to the GPARD in determining which issues should be given priority.

Instrumentation alternatives

This study produced a rate of return which was somewhat lower than the 55% response rate that Crompton and Tian-Cole (1999) suggest might be expected from similar samples of general populations with no specific interest in parks and recreation. This is likely attributable to respondent fatigue experienced when completing a 36-item scale



Legend

- O – crosshairs intersect at 4.73 performance, 5.33 importance
- A = addressing the needs of people who are underemployed
- B = attracting businesses
- E = environmental stewardship
- H = improving community health
- R = attracting retirees
- T = attracting tourists
- U = stimulating urban rejuvenation
- V = enhancing real estate values
- Y = preventing youth crime

Fig. 1. Establishing the Park and Recreation Agency’s Repositioning Options

(that covers all nine repositioning options) for both importance and performance measures. To increase response rates and thereby improve the representativeness of

study results, a shortened version of the scale may have more utility.

Three options are available for formulating a shortened instrument. The first option

involves simply removing a certain number of items from each dimension. Retaining the two items in the attracting businesses dimension and selecting only three items for each of the other eight dimensions would result in a 26-item instrument.

Following this guideline, a recommended shortened instrument is presented in Table 2 based on the data collected in this study. The content of the stimulating urban rejuvenation and the attracting businesses dimensions is unchanged because these dimensions already contained only two and three items, respectively. However, for dimensions 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 alphas for the importance and performance aspects of a dimension were inconsistent in their recommendations as to which item(s) should be selected, the importance factor alpha was given priority. When the reliability coefficients were comparable for alternate sets of three items, the authors used their best judgement to select the set that best described the dimensions of the domain. The coefficient alpha for each of the abridged factors exceeded the recommended minimum of 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994), and each factor demonstrated significant levels of construct validity ($p < 0.001$).

In addition, paired samples t-tests were used to compare the grand means of the shortened factors with those of the full factors. Difference tests were not undertaken for the attracting businesses and stimulating urban rejuvenation dimensions because they were unchanged. Out of the 14 remaining comparisons that were possible (both importance and performance for seven dimensions), eleven were significant, indicating that the two instruments produced somewhat different results. However, the absolute difference between each pair of significantly

different grand means ranged from 0.04 to 0.23 (on the 7-point scale). Such a small difference alters the placement of the dimension on the importance-performance (I-P) grid only minimally, and is unlikely to change the implications that the I-P analysis suggests. Therefore, given the shortened dimensions' internal consistency and construct validity, an agency could use these with confidence if it desired an instrument that allowed it to assess stakeholders' perceptions on *all* of these potential repositioning issues.

A second option for obtaining a shortened instrument is to include items from only a limited number of dimensions. If an agency was convinced 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 want to exclude the items representing irrelevant repositioning dimensions. For example, if the agency is convinced that stakeholders do not perceive unemployment (four items) and youth crime (five items) to be pervasive community concerns, excluding these dimensions 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 investigate perceptions of the agency's performance as well as that of competing public and community agencies. This option recognizes that contributions of the agency and its competitors need only be examined for important issues that could feasibly form the basis of the agency's repositioning efforts. Consequently, this second instrument would address the agency's perfor-

Table 2 Comparison of dimensions' importance and performance ratings by gender**Improving Community Health**

educating residents on the benefits of physical activity
 helping people build healthy lifestyles
 supporting and working with community health organizations

Environmental Stewardship

improving air quality
 reducing the amount of energy consumed by residents
 protecting environmentally sensitive areas

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

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

Attracting and Retaining Businesses

encouraging executives and professionals to live in this community
 convincing businesses to locate in this community

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

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

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

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

mance on only a few dimensions, and would require that competitor sections be included for only that limited set of important issues.

Positioning relative to a competitor

The first IPA (Figure 1) established priority issues in the community and GPARD's perfor-

mance in addressing those issues. However, since the position that residents hold for a leisure service agency exists relative to other public agency competitors, this first IPA alone is insufficient for repositioning. A second IPA is needed to investigate competitors' performances on the important issues

that are candidates for an agency's repositioning (Kim and Oh, 2002).

To illustrate this process, Figure 2 plots the performance of GPARD and the Police Department on the issue of preventing youth crime which was one of the three important issues identified in Figure 1. The overall importance of the issue in the community (5.96) remains constant from the first IPA to the second, but the second grid allows GPARD's performance to be compared with that of another public agency with similar objectives. The Police Department received a mean performance rating of 5.01 (with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 4.87 to 5.16), whereas GPARD's mean performance rating was previously identified to be 4.78. This suggests that the Police Department's contribution to preventing youth crime was perceived to be significantly greater ($p < 0.001$) than that of the GPARD.

In the second IPA, the individual items were also plotted to provide GPARD with more information about each element in the preventing youth crime dimension. On the most important item, 'helping youth to develop into productive citizens', the contributions of GPARD and the Police Department were rated equally. The Police Department was perceived to be better at 'reducing the rate of repeat offences by young offenders', 'providing positive role models for adolescents' and 'increasing the self-esteem of teenagers in the community'. Conversely, the contributions of GPARD were perceived to be greater for 'providing youth with positive ways to fill their free time'.

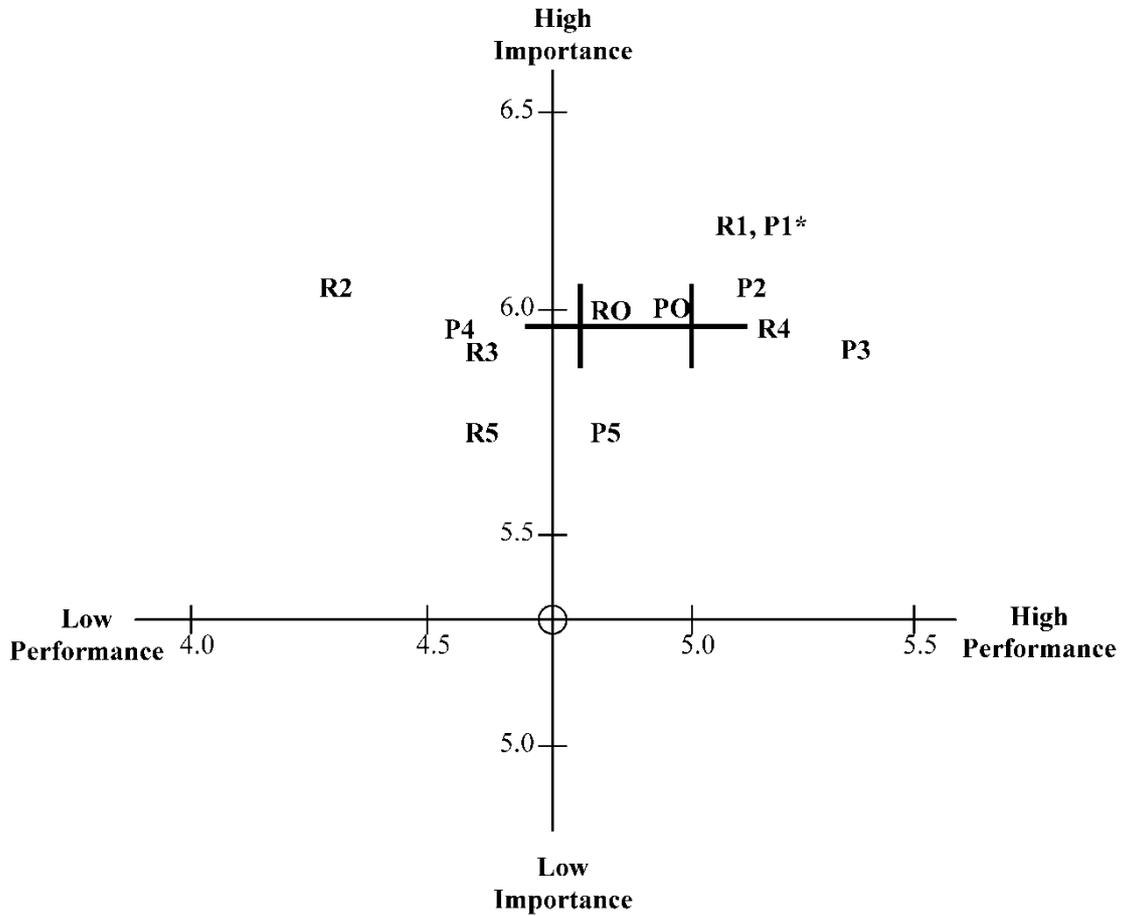
DISCUSSION

In Figure 1, the issues of preventing youth crime, environmental stewardship, and enhancing real estate values were all rated high in importance, while addressing under-employment, attracting tourists, stimulating urban rejuvenation, and attracting retirees fell distinctly into the low importance quad-

rants. However, the importance attributed to attracting businesses and improving community health is less clear, given that the crosspoints for these dimensions overlap the horizontal axis. Similarly, the crosspoints for GPARD's performance in preventing youth crime, attracting tourists, attracting retirees, stimulating urban rejuvenation, and environmental stewardship all overlap the vertical axis. Relative to other issues, residents rated the agency's performance on these dimensions as neither high nor low.

These results suggest that a repositioning strategy should be structured around the important issues of preventing youth crime, environmental stewardship, and/or enhancing real estate values. On the issue of enhancing real estate values, GPARD is already perceived as making a fairly strong contribution. In order to garner increased tax allocations, all that may be necessary is strategic competitive repositioning. However, if GPARD is already perceived as performing better than any of its competitors in this arena, further repositioning is unlikely to yield significantly greater resources. A more fruitful alternative may be to reposition around the issue of either preventing youth crime or environmental stewardship, or both. These dimensions are located quite close together on the IP grid, both with high importance ratings and relatively low agency performance ratings. The use of real and psychological repositioning tactics should improve perceptions of GPARD's performance on either of these high priority issues.

It was mentioned earlier that a leisure service agency may usefully adopt more than one important issue and position each of its different services to address one of the selected issues. In this case, GPARD's recreation programs could be focused around the issue of youth crime, while the Department's park operations could be positioned as contributing to environmental stewardship. However, before any repositioning decisions are made or actions undertaken, the perfor-



Legend

O – crosshairs intersect at 4.73 performance, 5.33 importance

R = Parks and Recreation Department’s overall performance in preventing youth crime

P = Police Department’s overall performance in preventing youth crime

1 = helping youth to develop into productive citizens

2 = reducing the rate of repeat offenses by young offenders

3 = providing positive role models for adolescents

4 = providing youth with positive ways to fill their free time

5 = increasing the self-esteem of teenagers in the community

* performance of Parks and Recreation Department and Police rated equally

Fig. 2. Park and Recreation Department's Performance Relative to a 'Competitor'

mance of relevant competitors must be considered. Accordingly, Figure 2 plotted the performance of GPARD as well as the Police Department on the important issue of youth crime, and it was observed that residents perceived the Police Department's contributions to this issue to be significantly greater.

The placement of individual items on the grid for the two departments offers suggestions to GPARD for applying the three repositioning tactics. With regard to real repositioning, attention could be focused on the issues for which GPARD received lower performance ratings than the Police Department. The lowest rated item for GPARD was 'reducing the rate of repeat offences by young offenders', for which the Police Department's perceived performance was markedly higher. Developing and distributing programs directly aimed at young offenders could increase perceptions of GPARD's contributions to reducing recidivism. In contrast, the GPARD is already perceived as 'providing youth with positive ways to fill their free time' and 'helping youth to develop into productive citizens'. For these issues, competitive repositioning showing GPARD's contributions relative to those of the Police Department may be most rewarding.

Finally, psychological repositioning may be most appropriate for those items on which the agency is performing close to average, specifically 'providing positive role models for adolescents' and 'increasing the self-esteem of teenagers in the community'. To close the gap between GPARD and the Police Department on these two items, the challenge may be to change stakeholders' perceptions of what GPARD is currently doing by communicating the functions of their personnel and programs in these terms.

A leisure service agency may find it useful to segment its constituency prior to selecting and implementing a repositioning strategy. Using multivariate analyses of variance,

Tables 3, 4 and 5 illustrate the differences in importance and performance ratings of the nine dimensions when the sample of Grapevine residents is segmented by gender, age and number of years lived in the city. For the gender variable, several significant differences existed between males and females for both the importance and performance ratings of the nine issues. With respect to age, few differences existed in the importance ratings but, on many of the issues, GPARD's performance was rated differentially by the various age groups.

Finally, for the longevity variable, a number of significant differences were observed among the groups for the importance and performance ratings of the dimensions.

Segmenting the agency's constituency prior to repositioning may be more useful for some community issues than for others. For example, the importance and performance ratings for the enhancing real estate values dimension were relatively similar among the groups within the gender, age, and longevity variables. Similarly, ratings of improving community health differed only when the sample was segmented by gender. When repositioning around either of these issues, the effort expended on segmenting residents is not likely to be worthwhile.

In contrast, many of the other repositioning issues exhibited significant differences for some or all of the three segmentation variables examined. For example, the importance and performance attributed to addressing the needs of people who are underemployed varied significantly among the groups on all three variables. Segmentation prior to repositioning around this issue may be more useful.

Most of the significant differences observed between groups in the age and longevity tables were attributable solely to the consistently higher importance and performance ratings provided by people over the age of 60, and by people who had resided in Grapevine for more than 15 years. Given

Table 3 Comparison of Dimensions' Importance and Performance Ratings by Gender

Dimension	Male	Female	df	F	p
Enhancing home real-estate values					
Importance	5.64	5.77	1	1.78	0.18
Performance	5.18	5.26	1	0.53	0.47
Attracting tourists to the community					
Importance	4.72	4.95	1	2.87	0.09
Performance	4.48	4.91	1	9.85	0.00
Addressing the needs of people who are underemployed					
Importance	4.41	5.01	1	16.07	0.00
Performance	3.83	4.12	1	4.16	0.04
Attracting and retaining retirees					
Importance	5.00	5.40	1	11.21	0.00
Performance	4.58	5.11	1	15.83	0.00
Preventing youth crime					
Importance	5.77	6.15	1	12.08	0.00
Performance	4.60	4.98	1	6.95	0.01
Attracting and retaining businesses					
Importance	5.33	5.39	1	0.19	0.66
Performance	4.37	4.62	1	2.81	0.10
Environmental stewardship					
Importance	5.61	5.88	1	7.15	0.01
Performance	4.56	4.81	1	3.75	0.05
Improving community health					
Importance	5.19	5.45	1	4.60	0.03
Performance	4.83	5.23	1	10.42	0.00
Stimulating urban rejuvenation					
Importance	5.08	5.28	1	3.23	0.07
Performance	4.58	4.94	1	6.32	0.01

this observation, a reasonable assumption would be that older people's (60+) opinions differ substantially from those of younger residents (18-59) who are relatively homogeneous in their ratings of the issues' importance and GPARD's performance. Therefore, rather than develop diverse strategies for each age group, differential repositioning may be useful only for older residents.

The utility of segmentation to repositioning efforts may be inherently limited. Traditional conceptualizations of public sector leisure service delivery suggested

that segmentation was essential to effective marketing (Crompton and Lamb, 1986). Target markets were identified and then services were developed, priced, distributed and promoted to satisfy the wants of different clientele groups. However, under the new model of public sector marketing (Novatorov and Crompton, 2001a, b), marketing tactics are directed towards the entire jurisdiction of residents, not just the agency's participants. This marketing will take the form of repositioning, and substantially greater dependence will be placed on promotion,

Table 4 Comparison of dimensions' importance and performance ratings by age

Dimension	60+	50-59	40-49	30-39	18-29	df	F	p
Enhancing home real-estate values								
Importance	5.65	5.67	5.67	5.80	5.88	4	0.50	0.74
Performance	5.30	5.35	5.08	5.33	5.10	4	1.10	0.36
Attracting tourists to the community								
Importance	4.88	5.03	4.64	4.95	4.75	4	1.44	0.22
Performance	4.79	4.99 ^x	4.44 ^y	4.70	4.78	4	2.49	0.04
Addressing the needs of people who are underemployed								
Importance	5.16	4.63	4.50	4.91	4.85	4	2.21	0.07
Performance	4.77 ^x	3.95 ^y	3.77 ^y	4.07	3.46 ^y	4	5.43	0.00
Attracting and retaining retirees								
Importance	5.56	5.40	5.09	5.01	4.75	4	3.16	0.01
Performance	5.30 ^x	4.97	4.64 ^y	4.90	4.29 ^y	4	3.44	0.01
Preventing youth crime								
Importance	6.19	5.87	5.92	6.03	5.98	4	0.80	0.52
Performance	5.36 ^x	4.80	4.71	4.80	3.91 ^y	4	3.93	0.00
Attracting and retaining businesses								
Importance	5.49	5.55	5.19	5.31	5.44	4	1.33	0.26
Performance	4.81	4.73	4.22	4.64	4.17	4	2.81	0.03
Environmental stewardship								
Importance	5.82	5.74	5.62	5.90	5.79	4	1.08	0.36
Performance	5.22 ^x	4.66	4.53 ^y	4.75	4.30	4	2.95	0.02
Improving community health								
Importance	5.56	5.34	5.11	5.43	5.38	4	0.16	0.33
Performance	5.37	4.98	4.97	5.09	4.61	4	1.66	0.16
Stimulating urban rejuvenation								
Importance	4.99	5.17	5.14	5.25	5.61	4	1.17	0.32
Performance	4.89	5.01	4.49	4.77	5.00	4	2.39	0.05

*Different superscripts designate group means that are significantly different ($p < 0.05$).

especially when using psychological and competitive repositioning. Public agencies have traditionally been somewhat limited in the extent to which they can engage in promotion, and even further limited in the extent to which they can accomplish segmentation in these communications. Consequently, although an agency can still adopt multiple important community issues and position different aspects of its services as addressing one of those concerns, the

recipients of its repositioning messages will likely be undifferentiated.

Consideration should be given to timing and order when applying the three repositioning strategies. While all three approaches should be employed, real repositioning is a definite prerequisite to successful psychological and competitive repositioning. Once the agency has sufficient programs in place to address the priority community issue(s), psychological repositioning can be

Table 5 Comparison of Dimensions' Importance and Performance Ratings by Number of Years Lived in Grapevine

Dimension	0–5	5.5–10	10.5–15	15.5+	df	F	p
Enhancing home real-estate values							
Importance	5.68	5.73	5.63	5.79	3	0.41	0.75
Performance	5.18	5.16	5.16	5.41	3	0.88	0.45
Attracting tourists to the community							
Importance	4.89	4.62	4.71	5.09	3	2.07	0.10
Performance	4.71	4.54 ^x	4.27 ^x	5.19 ^y	3	6.57	0.00
Addressing the needs of people who are underemployed							
Importance	4.60 ^x	4.57	4.61	5.16 ^y	3	3.13	0.03
Performance	3.99	3.78 ^x	3.65 ^x	4.44 ^y	3	5.00	0.00
Attracting and retaining retirees	5.04 ^x	5.15	5.14	5.57 ^y	3	3.43	0.02
Importance	4.74	4.86	4.62	5.15	3	2.43	0.07
Performance							
Preventing youth crime	5.92	5.92	6.01	6.07	3	0.42	0.74
Importance	4.70 ^x	4.63 ^x	4.60 ^x	5.24 ^y	3	3.66	0.01
Performance							
Attracting and retaining businesses							
Importance	5.49	5.17	5.30	5.39	3	1.26	0.29
Performance	4.56	4.35	4.08 ^x	4.92 ^y	3	4.50	0.00
Environmental stewardship							
Importance	5.73	5.55 ^x	5.78	5.96 ^y	3	2.46	0.07
Performance	4.66	4.53 ^x	4.40 ^x	5.12 ^y	3	4.74	0.00
Improving community health							
Importance	5.30	5.24	5.34	5.42	3	0.36	0.78
Performance	4.96	5.02	4.92	5.24	3	1.15	0.33
Stimulating urban rejuvenation							
Importance	5.22	5.14	4.95	5.37	3	1.82	0.14
Performance	4.78 ^x	4.56 ^x	4.33 ^x	5.31 ^y	3	7.42	0.00

*Different superscripts designate group means that are significantly different ($p < 0.05$).

used to educate stakeholders' on the public benefits that accrue from these services.

Finally, when stakeholders are convinced of the agency's contributions to broader community concerns, competitive repositioning can be used to demonstrate how parks and recreation better accomplishes these mandates than other public departments.

In summary, the two importance-performance analyses described in this article

demonstrate how a park and recreation agency can use results obtained from the IPAs to develop repositioning strategies. The first IPA establishes the priority issues in the community, while the second permits more in-depth comparisons with competitors on the priority issues.

NOTES

1. A reviewer of this article argued that there is insufficient scientific evidence to support the

contention that park and recreation services can contribute to these ends. He/she commented:

This article simply takes them for granted—i.e. that it is possible to achieve competitive repositioning by claiming to be as effective in dealing with crime as the police. This position is simply not a tenable one—the underlying assumptions on which much of this is based can be regarded as, at least, questionable—a very strange juxtaposition of refined positivism and assertion about ‘real repositioning’ without evidence!

The reviewer’s comments are made in the context of the UK. We are aware that others have supported this view (Long and Sanderson, 2001; Long, 1998), but do not accept it in the context of the US. We recognize this literature is underdeveloped and much remains to be done. We do not disagree with Coalter’s (2002) assertion that ‘the evidence is limited, uneven and incomplete’ (p. 43), and that ‘there is an urgent demand for more evidence’ (Coalter, 2001, p. 8). Nevertheless, substantial, supportive evidence has emerged in the last decade. The evidence makes it clear that effective contributions by park and recreation agencies are context specific, dependent on such factors as the way services are structured; the commitment and ability of their leadership; resources invested in them; and the community, bureaucratic and political environments in which they are delivered. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that parks and recreation services *can* contribute to each of these nine ends. The evidence is reviewed in the citations given. Readers seeking more detailed citations on these issues are invited to contact John Crompton at jcrompton@tamu.edu

REFERENCES

- Aaker, D. A. and Shansby, J. G. (1982) Positioning your product, *Business Horizons*, **3**, 56–62.
- Batra, R., Myers, J. G. and Aaker, D. A. (1996) *Advertising Management*, Fifth Edition, Upper Saddle River, NJ, Prentice Hall.
- Coalter, F. (2001) Culture of success, *Leisure Manager*, January, 8–10.
- Coalter, F. (2002). Warning: having fun can seriously improve your life, *Leisure Management*, March, 42–45.
- Crompton, J. L. and Lamb, C. W. (1986) *Marketing Government and Social Services*, New York, John Wiley & Sons.
- Crompton, J. L. and Tian-Cole, S. (1999) What response rate can be expected from questionnaire surveys that address park and recreation issues? *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, **17**, 60–72.
- Crompton, J. L. (1984) Voluntary retrenchment of park and recreation services: opportunities and problems, *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, **2**(3), 10–20.
- Crompton, J. L. (1988) A citizen sensitive approach to retrenching services in the public sector, *American Review of Public Administration*, **18**, 79–94.
- Crompton, J. L. (1999a) *Financing and Acquiring Park and Recreation Resources*, Champaign, IL, Human Kinetics.
- Crompton, J. L. (1999b) *Measuring the Economic Impact of Visitors to Sports Tournaments and Special Events*, Ashburn, VA, National Recreation and Park Association.
- Crompton, J. L. (2000a) Repositioning leisure services, *Managing Leisure*, **5**, 65–76.
- Crompton, J. L. (2000b) *The Impact of Parks and Open Space on Property Values and the Property Tax Base*, Ashburn, VA, National Recreation and Park Association.
- Crompton, J. L. (2001) *Parks and Economic Development*, Chicago, IL, American Planning Association.
- Dillman, D. A. (2000) *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Total Design Method*, Second Edition, New York, John Wiley & Sons.
- Driver, B. L. and Bruns, D. H. (1999) Concepts and uses of the benefits approach to leisure, in E. L. Jackson and T. L. Burton (eds.), *Leisure Studies: Prospects for the Twenty-First Century*, State College, PA, Venture.
- Fill, C. (1999) *Marketing Communications: Contexts, Contents and Strategies*, Second Edition, Hemel Hempstead, Prentice Hall Europe.
- Glyptis, S. (1989) *Leisure and Unemployment*, Milton Keynes, Open University.
- Kim, B. and Oh, H. (2002) An extended application of importance-performance analysis, *Journal of Hospitality and Leisure Marketing*, **9**, 107–125.

- Kotler, P. (2000) *Marketing Management, The Millennium Edition*, Upper Saddle River, NJ, Prentice Hall.
- Kotler, P. Haider, D. H. and Rein, I. (1993) *Marketing Places: Attracting Investment, Industry, and Tourism to Cities, States, and Nations*, New York, Free Press.
- Long, J. and Sanderson, I. (2001) The social benefits of sport: Where's the proof? In C. Gratton and I. P. Henry (eds.), *Sport in the City*, London, Routledge.
- Long, J. (1998) No evidence of social benefits of leisure, *The Leisure Manager*, January, p. 9.
- Martilla, J. A. and James, J. C. (1977) Importance-performance analysis, *Journal of Marketing*, **41**, 77-79.
- Novatorov, E. V. and Crompton, J. L. (2001a) A revised conceptualization of marketing in the context of public leisure services, *Journal of Leisure Research*, **33**, 160-185.
- Novatorov, E. V. and Crompton, J. L. (2001b) Reformulating the conceptualization of marketing in the context of public leisure services, *Leisure Studies*, **20**, 61-75.
- Nunnally, J. and Bernstein, I. (1994) *Psychometric Theory*, Third Edition, New York, McGraw Hill.
- Ries, A. and Trout, J. (1986) *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind*, New York, NY, McGraw-Hill.
- Tarrant, M. A. and Smith, E. K. (2002) The use of a modified importance-performance framework to examine visitor satisfaction with attributes of outdoor recreation settings, *Managing Leisure*, **7**, 69-82.