

The Index of Recreation Marketing Excellence: An Audit Instrument for Measuring the Effectiveness of Marketing Efforts at a Student Recreation Center

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Executive Summary: The paper develops and demonstrates the use of a comprehensive audit for evaluating the effectiveness of external marketing, internal marketing, and service quality in the context of a recreation center. The inclusion of internal marketing and service quality in the audit represents an extension of existing audit frameworks in the recreation field that have focused exclusively on external marketing. The purpose of an audit is to identify strengths and weaknesses of the marketing effort, which validates or leads to a revision of a facility's operating procedures. The Index of Recreation Marketing Excellence audit framework developed in the paper was substantially adapted from an instrument that had been designed for use in the private sector.

The 66-item audit instrument was tested at a large recreation center that had recorded over one million visits in the past year and had an extensive array of facilities. It was administered to a convenience sample of the facility's users (n=300), all front-line employees (n=150), and all management-level employees (n=40). Response rates of 74, 69, and 82 percent, respectively, were obtained from the three groups. Reliability coefficients of some of the scales in the audit instrument were relatively low, probably because of the small number of items in these scales. The case study data revealed that managers were consistently stronger in their belief that the center's external marketing strategy was effective than were those responsible for enacting it on the front line. On the selected items of the external marketing scales to which center users were invited to respond, they were generally less positive than management. The internal marketing scales highlighted wages and benefits, raises and awards, and feedback on job performance as items that employees thought needed to be addressed, while good working conditions and positive relations with supervisors and co-workers were strengths. The service quality items identified as needing most attention reflected the heavy use of the facility in that they related to cleanliness and maintenance issues. These implications derived from the case study are not generalizable, but they illustrate the type of insights that might be forthcoming from use of the audit. Suggestions for improving the audit instrument are provided.

Keywords: Marketing audit, recreation services, interactive marketing, external marketing, internal marketing, service quality

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Introduction

The concept of a marketing audit was introduced into the recreation management literature by Crompton and Lamb (1986). The primary purpose of such an audit is to develop a comprehensive profile of the effectiveness of an agency's total marketing effort. The audit concept was intended to assist managers in recreation organizations to identify marketing problems systematically through a comprehensive internal and external analysis, rather than to rely only on their experience and intuition. Audits are intended to validate and/or lead to a revision of operating procedures and outcomes, since they identify strengths and weaknesses of the marketing effort. In addition to this formal objective, the process of undertaking an audit is also an excellent mechanism for improving communication and raising marketing consciousness within an agency.

For over a decade, the Crompton and Lamb audit has been available to recreation managers for use as a guide for identifying marketing problems and for prioritizing issues for remedial action. During the past decade, however, pivotal changes have occurred in the marketing discipline that challenge the comprehensiveness and orientation of the original Crompton and Lamb audit. Their framework was developed primarily from the goods marketing literature and was based on the discrete transaction paradigm that prevailed in the marketing field at that time. This framework focused exclusively on an agency's external clientele. However, in the 1980s, services marketing emerged as a distinctive subdiscipline of the marketing field, and it embraced a shift toward the more comprehensive relationship marketing paradigm. Relationship marketing developed in response to the recognition that services had features that made them distinctively different from products. Their differentiating characteristics suggested that internal marketing activities and service quality should be incorporated as marketing functions within an audit framework, in addition to the traditional set of external marketing activities.

Internal marketing involves "facilitating marketing throughout the organization," and the audit's task is to "capture employees' perceptions of the degree to which they feel motivated, prepared, and able to perform marketing functions" (Berry, Connant, & Parasuraman, 1991, p. 259). This facet of the audit is important because employees are an agency's primary marketers since they interact with visitors. Indeed, in some situations, interaction with employees constitutes the primary dimension of the recreation "product" that visitors are purchasing. There is growing

recognition that fulfilling the needs of employees is likely to be a prerequisite to high quality service. If employees are not happy with their jobs, then the external user is unlikely to be uppermost in their minds. If these employees love their jobs and have pride in the agency, then it is likely to lead to facility users being well served (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991; Gremler, Bitner, & Evans, 1993; Gronroos, 1990; Kotler & Armstrong, 1991; Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991). Hence, a marketing audit that fails to address employee actions and attitudes is incomplete.

The pivotal role of service quality has been widely recognized in the recreation literature (Crompton & MacKay, 1989; Wright, Duray, & Goodale, 1992; Crompton & Love, 1995). Evaluations of service quality have been conducted that recognize the interdependence of service quality and internal marketing (Baker & Fesenmaier, 1997). However, such evaluations have usually been undertaken independent of audits. Since one of the primary goals of internal marketing is to stimulate employees to deliver excellent service, service quality and internal marketing should be evaluated together within the context of a marketing audit. The effectiveness of internal and external marketing efforts is best evaluated primarily by employees and senior managers, while the output of these efforts is best evaluated by users in terms of service quality. Conceptually, increases in scores on perceptions of external and internal marketing effectiveness by organizational publics are likely to lead to increases in users' service quality scores.

The purpose of this study was to develop an extended audit framework that included the two additional marketing functions of internal marketing and service quality, and that focused on the specific attributes and characteristics of services offered by a student recreation center. The applicability of the new framework was then demonstrated in a case study.

The Index of Services Marketing Excellence

Berry et al. (1991) pointed out that most marketing audit frameworks ignored the differences between goods and services (Berry, 1980; Shostack, 1977). Hence, their usefulness was limited because the assumptions about the total marketing operation on which they were based were developed prior to emergence of the services marketing field. Such traditional audits are now recognized as being incomplete. To rectify this problem, Berry et al. (1991) developed an Index of Services Marketing Excellence (ISME) framework. They defined the ISME as "a systematic, periodic, objective, and comprehensive examination of an organization's—or an organizational unit's—preparedness for services marketing and its current effectiveness along the dimensions of marketing orientation, marketing organization, new customer marketing, existing customer marketing, internal marketing, and service quality" (p. 261). It encompassed a comprehensive evaluation of the total marketing operation of a service business and generated information from three different samples: users, employees, and managers.

The instrument consisted of 76 items that reflected six ISME dimensions. The *marketing orientation* dimension, consisting of 17 items, was intended to measure the degree to which a firm's activities reflected a primary focus on the customer. *Marketing organization* assessed the effectiveness of a firm's structure for supporting marketing activities and was measured by 10 items. The *new customer* and *existing customer* dimensions consisted of nine and 11 items, respectively, that measured the degree to which attracting new customers and cementing relationships with existing customers was given in the marketing effort. The *internal marketing* dimension was concerned with attracting, preparing, motivating, and retaining employees and was measured by 10 items. Finally, *service quality* was operationalized as the extent to which a service's performance met customers' expectations along five dimensions: reliability, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. It was evaluated by 19 items.

While most previous audit frameworks employed an open-ended checklist methodology, the ISME instrument used a different methodological approach because with open-ended questions it is difficult to make comparisons across different types of respondent publics, different time periods, and different organizational units. Its 76 structured items were measured by 7-point strongly agree-strongly disagree Likert-type scales. In addition to its services orientation, a distinguishing advantage of ISME is that it was designed to solicit views from the three categories of respondents who form the service marketing triangle: the company's managers, its nonmanagerial employees, and its customers.

The ISME framework had some limitations that were likely to limit its utility for use in recreation organizations. It was primarily developed and tested in a large organization that provided commercial industrial services. Hence, it neglected differences between commercial and public sector organizations. The literature suggests that the nonfinancial objectives of public organizations result in difficult operationalizations and perceptions of customer orientation to that which prevails in commercial organizations (Goodale, 1985; Schultz, McAvoy, & Dustin, 1988); public agencies may have less flexible strategic options since they are limited by a relatively rigid social mission (Gallagher & Weinberg, 1991); and in some contexts their overall goal may be to convince the public to accept behavior patterns congruent with the organization's mission (selling orientation), rather than to satisfy customers' needs (marketing orientation) (Capon & Mauser, 1982; ; Rados, 1981; Walsh, 1994). Furthermore, it has been suggested that the role of marketing in public sector organizations is supportive rather than preeminent (Mokwa, Dawson, & Prieve, 1980), and marketing concepts are likely to be substantially modified before they are transferred to the public sector (Crompton & Lamb, 1986). Thus, items comprising the original ISME were replaced or modified by the present authors to reflect and recognize these differences.

Another specific limitation of ISME related to its usefulness for evaluating internal marketing. Varey (1995) noted "much of the work

done so far on internal marketing has been embryonic and descriptive or prescriptive [and] there is as yet some confusion over what internal marketing actually is, its role, and how it can be implemented" (p. 41). Some consensus, however, has emerged on three major issues: (1) employees are internal customers and jobs are internal products; (2) employees' satisfaction with internal products can lead to users' satisfaction with the external service; and (3) external marketing tools can be applied in the internal context (Brown, Fisk, & Bitner, 1994). Thus, there appears to be agreement that a central element in the evaluation of internal marketing should embrace employees' satisfaction with their jobs, but this was only tangentially addressed in the ISME instrument.

Further limitations of the ISME related to its conceptualization of service quality and the SERVQUAL instrument used to measure it. The ISME did not include an importance measure in evaluating service quality attributes, and it assumed that the service quality items were generalizable to different service industries. A number of researchers, however, have suggested that the importance dimension should be included in measurements of service quality (Crompton & Love, 1995; Dorfman, 1979), while others have shown that differences between such service industries as health, airlines, retailing, and recreation make it inappropriate to apply the SERVQUAL instrument without adaptation to the specific service context (Carman, 1990; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1991; Wright et al., 1992). Thus, it was decided that an importance measure should be included in the evaluation of service quality and the SERVQUAL instrument should be adapted to incorporate items specific to the context of a recreation center.

A final shortcoming of the ISME related to the major categories into which its items were organized. It appears to the present authors to be more consistent and convenient to organize these items around the three major functions of services marketing: external marketing, internal marketing, and service quality. There is an emerging consensus in the literature that these three functions constitute the total marketing operation in a service organization (Bitner, 1995; Gremler et al., 1993; Gronroos, 1990; Kotler, 1994; Kotler & Armstrong, 1991). Hence, the first four of the ISME dimensions, marketing orientation, marketing organization, new participant strategy, and existing user strategy, were merged into a single external marketing instrument.

Development of the Index of Recreation Marketing Excellence

To paraphrase Berry et al. (1991), the authors believed that the ISME, while providing an excellent foundation, was not sufficiently sensitive to the unique characteristics of a recreation center to allow recreation center managers to use it. This premise prompted the decision to develop and field test a marketing audit instrument designed specifically for student recreation centers, which is the objective of this paper. A number of deletions,

modifications, and extensions were made to the original ISME framework to form the Index of Recreation Marketing Excellence (IRME). These changes were intended to orient the instrument to the specific milieu and needs of a recreation center.

The final instrument was organized around the three broad functions of external marketing, internal marketing, and service quality. A summary of the scales used in the study is given in Table 1. The number of items used in each scale is shown in the second column of Table 1, while the number of items used in the original ISME scale is shown in the first column. The specific items used in each scale are shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4. The derivation of items used to measure marketing effectiveness in each of the three main functional areas is discussed in the following subsections.

Development of the External Marketing Function Items

Walsh (1994) maintains that the way public administrators think about their constituencies is influenced by the language they use. Similarly, Vanden Heede and Pelican (1995) argue that "language and its use are intrinsically linked with people's views of themselves and each other and their actions" (p. 144). Based on these observations, modification of the external marketing function items, and all other items adapted from the ISME, focused on the "translation" of items from business language into the public management lexicon. Table 1 shows that 11 of the original 17 ISME items used to measure marketing orientation were retained. However, their language, like all of the other ISME items that were retained, was modified to reflect the study's context. For example, in the original ISME, the first item in Table 2 was "decision making in this company is influenced strongly by client needs," which was changed to "decision making in this recreation center is influenced strongly by user needs."

The original ISME had 10 items related to marketing organization, and only two were retained in the new instrument. The eight that were omitted were all related to the role of a company's marketing department. These eight were not relevant to this study, since the student recreation center did not have a marketing department. Five of nine items on new user strategy that appeared on the ISME scale were omitted, because they referred to a company's response to direct competitors. Since there was no public recreation center in the community, the scale of the private health clubs was so much smaller and their target markets so different, the competition items were deemed to be redundant in the context of this study. Almost all of the ISME items were used in their modified form in the existing user strategy scale (Table 1).

Table 1: Composition and Reliability of Scales Used to Measure Elements of the Index of Recreation Marketing Excellence

| ISME Dimension | IRME Number of Items and Reliability Coefficients | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|-----|------------|-------|----------|-------|-----------|---|-------|---|-------|--|
| | ISME Items | | IRME Items | | Managers | | Employees | | Users | | α | |
| | No. | No. | No. | α | No. | α | No. | α | No. | α | | |
| External Marketing Function | 17 | 11 | 11 | α=.78 | 6 | α=.50 | — | — | — | — | N/A | |
| Marketing orientation | 10 | 2 | 2 | α=.53 | 2 | α=.63 | — | — | 1 | — | N/A | |
| Marketing organization | 9 | 5 | 5 | α=.60 | 4 | α=.56 | — | — | 2 | — | α=.61 | |
| New user strategy | 11 | 9 | 9 | α=.67 | 7 | α=.67 | — | — | 4 | — | α=.63 | |
| Existing user strategy | 9 | 8 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | |
| Internal Marketing Function | N/A | 2 | 2 | α=.50 | 2 | α=.65 | — | — | — | — | N/A | |
| Employee recruitment | N/A | 3 | 3 | α=.57 | 2 | α=.51 | — | — | — | — | N/A | |
| Employee support | N/A | 3 | 3 | α=.71 | 2 | α=.79 | — | — | — | — | N/A | |
| Employee rewards | N/A | 6 | — | N/A | 6 | α=.79 | — | — | — | — | N/A | |
| With job-motivators | N/A | 10 | — | N/A | 10 | α=.87 | — | — | — | — | N/A | |
| With job-hygienes | 19 | 15 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | |
| Service Quality Assurance | 5 | 5 | — | N/A | — | N/A | — | — | 5 | — | α=.83 | |
| Reliability & Tangibles | 5 | 3 | — | N/A | — | N/A | — | — | 5 | — | α=.64 | |
| Responsiveness | 3 | 2 | — | N/A | — | N/A | — | — | 3 | — | α=.72 | |
| Equipment Status | 2 | 2 | — | N/A | — | N/A | — | — | 2 | — | α=.71 | |

Development of the Internal Marketing Function Items

The internal marketing audit retained eight of the nine ISME items but extended the original ISME instrument to incorporate items that evaluated employees' job satisfaction. Ten job-related dissatisfiers or hygiene items and six job-related satisfiers that were originally developed by Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) were added to evaluate employees' satisfaction. They were presented in a format that facilitated the use of importance-performance analysis (Martilla & James, 1977). Both importance-performance analysis and Herzberg's job satisfaction theory have been widely applied in a recreation marketing context (Bartlett & Einert, 1992; Crompton & Duray, 1985; Edginton, Neal, & Edginton, 1989; Havitz, Twynam, & Lorenzo, 1991; Mengak, Dottavio, & O'Leary, 1986; Novatorov, 1997; Richardson, 1987; Sethna, 1982; Swinyard, 1980; Williams & Neal, 1993).

Herzberg's theory postulates that two qualitatively different groups of factors motivate employees. The first group of factors (dissatisfiers or hygienes) relate to the *job context*, such as working conditions, agency policy, and relations with supervisors, and lead to the condition of *dissatisfaction*. The second group of factors (satisfiers or motivators) relate to the *job content*, such as the work itself, achievement and responsibility, and lead to the condition of *satisfaction*.

These two categories were postulated by Herzberg to have different influences on employees. The hygiene factors could only cause dissatisfaction if they were absent. Their presence is expected because they are "ordinary" components of the job, so they have no satisfying potential when they are present. These were termed maintenance or hygiene factors by Herzberg, implying that they were essential to one's ordinary homeostatic "health." Others in the literature have referred to them as *extrinsic* needs, since they are elements outside an individual's psyche (Oliver, 1997). In contrast, the absence of motives does not cause dissatisfaction but results in a neutral state. The presence of motivators was perceived to be contingent on the availability of achievement, responsibility, and other such *intrinsic* sources of fulfillment.

Marketers who have used Herzberg's two-factor theory have made modifications to it. Pioneering studies discovered that at one moment in time a specific service's features may be important in influencing a purchase decision, while at another moment the same feature may have no influence on the decision (Haley, 1968; Myers & Alpert, 1968). Thus, in contrast to Herzberg's original position, marketers argued that the factors were dynamic. This implies that attribute preferences should be monitored sufficiently frequently to identify shifts in users' preferences. With this in mind, the IRME instrument incorporated both importance and performance mean scores. Thus, the 16 Herzberg attributes were measured with two five-point Likert-type scales, ranging from extremely important to extremely unimportant, and from extremely satisfied to extremely dissatisfied.

Development of the Service Quality Items

The ISME instrument used the SERVQUAL scales to measure service quality. These were developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985; 1988) and have been used extensively in the marketing field. Adapted versions of the scale have been widely used in the parks, recreation, and tourism fields (Childress & Crompton, 1997; Hamilton, Crompton, & More, 1988; MacKay & Crompton, 1990; Ostrowski, O'Brien, & Gordon, 1993; Wicks & Fesenmaier, 1993; Wright et al., 1992). They measure five dimensions of service quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The SERVQUAL developers referred to their instrument as a basic skeleton that was likely to require adaptation to meet the conditions of a particular context (Parasuraman et al., 1988) and, indeed, many of the SERVQUAL items were deemed to be inappropriate for the student recreation center context of this study. Hence, selection of items for measuring service quality in this study was a judgmental process, made by the researchers and the center's senior management.

Their selections were made from the list developed by Wright et al. (1992), whose 30 service-quality attributes were oriented specifically to recreation centers. Wright et al. (1992) generated a master list of 70 items derived from focus groups and a literature review. A series of reduction procedures were used to arrive at a final instrument comprised of 30 items. Wright et al. (1992) did not relate the items to SERVQUAL dimensions, but in the selections for this study an attempt was made to reflect those dimensions. The 11 items that were omitted from the Wright et al. (1992) set of 30 mainly related to recreation classes and refreshment services that were not of interest to the student center managers in this study.

The service quality section of the instrument had three sections. The first section asked respondents their expectations of the minimum level of service with which they would be satisfied at a recreation center, the second section sought their perceptions of service performance at the selected recreation center, and the third section requested respondents to report the importance of each attribute to them. The standard format for measuring service quality (performance minus expectation) was used. The inclusion of an importance dimension was a deviation from standard measures of service quality, but has been shown to be useful for audit and diagnostic purposes (Crompton & Love, 1995).

Methods

The study was undertaken at a large one-year-old student recreation facility at a major university that had recently celebrated admission of its one millionth visitation and was interested in evaluating the effectiveness of its marketing efforts. Hence, its users were almost exclusively university students, and this was reflected in the sample. A small number of non-student memberships were sold, but they were substantially restricted, and such users constituted less than five percent of total visits. The facility provided a wide array of recreational services including aquatics, fitness

classes, instructional clinics, jogging track, multiple gymnasium activities, sports clubs, outdoor, and informal recreation.

The researchers met with the center's senior management and marketing staff to present, explain, and discuss the concepts of service and relationship marketing, and the elements of the IRME instrument. At the meeting, the center's management insisted on removal of some items relating to competition and the role of a marketing division, since they considered them nonapplicable to their context. They otherwise accepted the IRME framework.

Independent questionnaires were designed for the three different samples (management, employees, and users) as recommended by Berry et al. (1991). A single common instrument for all three groups was not feasible, because there were many items that were pertinent to one group or to two groups, but not to all three groups. For example, it was not useful to have users respond to questions about internal marketing functions since they would not be knowledgeable of such matters. A convenience sample of the facility's users ($n=300$), all frontline employees ($n=150$), and all management-level employees ($n=40$) were surveyed. Surveys were hand-delivered to each of the three respondent groups and subsequently collected by a researcher. All three groups of respondents received a cover letter from the researchers explaining the study and requesting their cooperation. Overall response rates were 74 percent ($224/300$) from users, 69 percent ($103/150$) from employees, and 82 percent ($33/40$) from managers.

Results

Reliability tests were conducted to check internal consistency of the scales. The reliability alpha values for the IRME scales among manager, employee, and user groups ranged from .50 to .87 (Table 1). A few of them were below Nunnally's (1978) recommended criterion of .60, suggesting that some of the scales needed further refinement. The results were somewhat lower than those reported in Berry et al.'s (1991) study using the ISME scale, in which most coefficients were .7 or higher. It is likely that the lower reliability scores of the IRME are at least partially attributable to the small number of items in some of the scales. For example, the original ISME scale combined 10 internal marketing items and reported a single reliability for the scale. In contrast, this study used three independent scales with no more than three items in each (Table 1). Similarly, the ISME scale for marketing organization contained 10 items, whereas the scale used in the IRME was comprised of only two items.

The relatively small sample size of the management group led to a concern that there may be violation of the assumption of normal distribution required by interval level statistics. This concern was confirmed by box plots showing some skewness. Thus, nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis H tests were used, rather than conventional ANOVAs, to test for differences

between the three groups. These were supplemented by Mann-Whitney U tests used to identify the source of differences identified by the Kruskal-Wallis H tests, and to test for differences on variables on which only two of the three groups were being compared.

Table 2: Results of the Evaluation of External Marketing Actions

| Dimensions and Scale Items | Managers | Employees | Users | p-value* |
|--|----------|-----------|-------|-------------------|
| Marketing Orientation | | | | |
| 1. Decision making in this rec center is influenced strongly by user needs. | 4.28 | — | — | — |
| 2. Senior managers in this rec center are always available to speak with users. | 3.72 | 3.64 | — | .84 |
| 3. We rarely do formal research about user needs in this rec center. (R) | 3.28 | — | — | — |
| 4. There is little relationship between the new services we develop in this rec center and genuine user needs. (R) | 4.28 | — | — | — |
| 5. The development of new services in this rec center is more haphazard than systematic. (R) | 4.00 | — | — | — |
| 6. We continually monitor user needs in search for new services to develop. | 3.84 | — | — | — |
| 7. In this rec center, marketing is everyone's responsibility, not just the marketing and public relations department's. | 3.64 | 3.96 | — | .34 |
| 8. Everyone in our rec center understands how each job influences user satisfaction. | 3.48 | 3.22 | — | .32 |
| 9. In our rec center, senior managers seek suggestions from employees for serving users better. | 4.24 | 3.39 | — | .00 |
| 10. The management of this Rec Center does not do a good job communicating our strategic goals to employees. (R) | 3.68 | 2.74 | — | .00 |
| 11. Everyone in this organization is dedicated to providing high quality user service. | 3.88 | 3.40 | — | .06 |
| Grand Means | 3.85 | 3.39 | — | .00 |
| Marketing Organization | | | | |
| 12. The activities of various departments in this rec center are well coordinated to ensure user satisfaction. | 3.52 | 3.49 | 3.82 | .01 ^c |
| 13. The organizational structure of this rec center facilitates entrepreneurial thinking. | 3.40 | 3.33 | — | .51 |
| Grand Means | 3.46 | 3.40 | 3.82 | .00 ^{bc} |

Table 2 Cont.

| | | | | |
|---|------|------|------|--------------------|
| New User Strategy | | | | |
| 14. Formal strategies are in place in this recreation center to attract new users. | 3.20 | 3.38 | — | .46 |
| 15. We do not devote sufficient resources to attract new users.(R) | 3.60 | 2.97 | — | .01 |
| 16. In this rec center we market our services to specific "market segments" rather than to one overall market. | 2.83 | — | — | — |
| 17. Our employees are well prepared to deliver our service to prospective users. | 4.00 | 3.64 | 3.56 | .03 ^b |
| 18. Our employees are poorly motivated to deliver our services to prospective users.(R) | 3.92 | 3.20 | 3.58 | .00 ^{ac} |
| Grand Means | 3.51 | 3.30 | 3.57 | .00 ^{ac} |
| Existing User Strategy | | | | |
| 19. We give existing users specific reasons to visit our rec center again in the future. | 3.76 | 3.86 | 3.56 | .01 ^c |
| 20. We demonstrate to users how much we value their patronage. | 3.48 | — | 3.14 | .05 |
| 21. When a user has a problem with our service, we will do whatever it takes to rectify the situation. | 4.04 | 3.72 | 3.25 | .00 ^{bc} |
| 22. The way we respond to user complaints and problems is a strength of this rec center. | 3.96 | — | — | — |
| 23. We communicate with existing users for the express purpose of reminding them of the benefits they receive from us. | 2.88 | 3.35 | — | .09 |
| 24. Our rec center stands behind what it delivers. | 4.24 | 3.82 | — | .02 |
| 25. Our employees are well prepared to deliver our services to existing users. | 4.04 | 3.61 | — | .06 |
| 26. Our employees are poorly motivated to deliver our services to existing users.(R) | 3.88 | 3.06 | — | .01 |
| 27. When users have problems or special needs, they often experience difficulty in reaching appropriate personnel quickly.(R) | 3.60 | 2.96 | 3.08 | .01 ^{ab} |
| Grand Means | 3.76 | 3.49 | 3.25 | .00 ^{abc} |

(R): Reversely Coded

* Kruskal-Wallis H and Mann-Whitney U tests

Significant difference (.05 level) between:

^a Managers group and employees group

^b Managers group and users group

^c Employees group and users group

Table 2 shows that all 27 items in the four scales designed to evaluate different facets of external marketing were scored higher than 2.70 on the 5.0 scale by all three groups. None of the grand mean scores on each scale among managers, employees, and users was scored lower than 3.25. Grand mean scores for the managers group were significantly higher than those of employees and users on three of the four scales, the exceptions being marketing organization and new user strategy, respectively. The users sample reported significantly higher scores than employees on the marketing organization and new user strategy scales, but significantly lower than employees on the existing user strategy. Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests identified significant differences between groups at the .05 level on items 9, 10, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 26, and 27 (Table 2). Managers rated most items in the external marketing evaluation instrument more highly than did employees. The data indicated that managers were consistently stronger in their belief that current external marketing strategy in the recreation center was effective than were those responsible for enacting it on the front line who were much less convinced of its effectiveness.

Many of the items on the external marketing scales were not relevant to the user sample. However, on those items to which they were invited to respond, users were generally less positive than management and employees. Of particular interest were the responses to items 18, 19, 21, and 27 (Table 2). On item 18, both managers and users were significantly more adamant than were employees that "our employees are poorly motivated to deliver our services to prospective users." This relatively more critical view by users of the effectiveness of employees appeared to be similarly reflected in items 19, 21, and 27. In item 19 employees were significantly more in agreement with the statement, "we give existing users specific reasons to visit our Rec Center again in the future." In item 21, users were significantly less affirmative than managers and employees to the item "when a user has a problem with our service, we will do whatever it takes to rectify the situation." On item 27, managers and users responded significantly stronger than employees to, "when users have problems on special needs, they often experience difficulty in reaching appropriate personnel quickly."

Table 3 shows that all three grand means and every item on the three internal marketing scales were rated higher by the managers group than by employees. Mann-Whitney U tests revealed significant differences between managers and employees on two items relating to employee rewards and one item in the employee support domain. The relatively low employee scores on the rewards item also appeared in item 17 on the Job-Hygiene scale in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of the Evaluation of Internal Marketing Actions

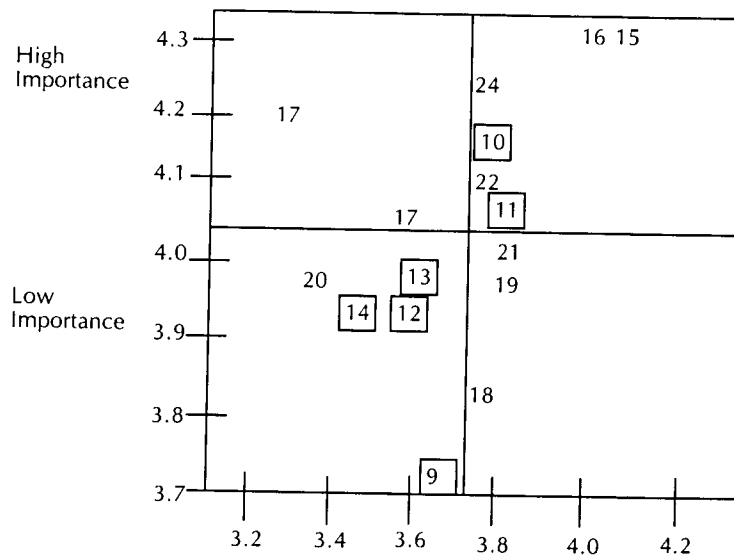
| Dimensions and Scales Items | Managers | Employees | p-value* |
|---|----------|---|----------|
| Employee Recruitment and Training | | | |
| 1. This rec center places considerable emphasis on hiring excellent people. | 4.08 | 3.71 | .06 |
| 2. In this rec center, the employees are properly trained to perform their services roles. | 3.84 | 3.60 | .35 |
| Grand Means | 3.96 | 3.65 | .07 |
| Employee Support | | | |
| 3. We place considerable emphasis in this rec center on communicating with our employees. | 4.08 | — | — |
| 4. Our rec center communicates to employees the importance of their service roles. | 3.92 | 3.63 | .12 |
| 5. Our management needs to do a better job listening to the concerns of employees.(R) | 3.68 | 2.51 | .00 |
| Grand Means | 3.89 | 3.07 | .00 |
| Employee Rewards | | | |
| 6. This rec center has the flexibility to accommodate the differing needs of employees. | 4.08 | — | — |
| 7. In our rec center, those employees who provide excellent service are rewarded for their efforts. | 4.00 | 3.24 | .00 |
| 8. Our rec center recognizes its outstanding employees. | 4.20 | 3.26 | .00 |
| Grand Means | 4.09 | 3.24 | .00 |
| Employee Satisfaction | | Importance/Performance Mean Values | |
| <i>With Job-Motivators:</i> | | | |
| 9. Being appointed leader of your group. | — | 3.74 / 3.63 | |
| 10. Doing worthwhile, interesting, and high quality work. | — | 4.18 / 3.73 | |
| 11. Being appreciated and recognized by supervisors. | — | 4.05 / 3.77 | |
| 12. Achieving personal goals related to work. | — | 3.95 / 3.58 | |
| 13. Learning new skills or knowledge. | — | 3.98 / 3.61 | |
| 14. Having a role in the decision-making process. | — | 3.96 / 3.48 | |
| Grand Means | — | 3.98 / 3.64 | |

Table 3 Cont.

| With Job-Hygienes: | | |
|---|---|-------------|
| 15. Getting along with supervisor and co-workers. | — | 4.28 / 4.05 |
| 16. Enjoying good working conditions. | — | 4.28 / 3.97 |
| 17. Receiving good wages and benefits. | — | 4.20 / 3.29 |
| 18. Having increased freedom on the job. | — | 3.83 / 3.74 |
| 19. Help your agency attain its goals. | — | 3.99 / 3.77 |
| 20. Getting raises and awards. | — | 3.99 / 3.38 |
| 21. Being an integral part of the work team. | — | 4.04 / 3.78 |
| 22. Having job security and steady work. | — | 4.10 / 3.71 |
| 23. Being informed about your job performance. | — | 4.07 / 3.56 |
| 24. Having opportunity for promotion and advancement. | — | 4.22 / 3.71 |
| Grand Means | — | 4.10 / 3.70 |

(R): Reversely Coded
 * Mann-Whitney U tests

Figure 1: Importance-Performance Grid of Employee Satisfaction



- (1) No group mean scores were less than 3.0 on either dimension.
 (2) Job motivator numbers on the figure are boxed in bold type, while job hygiene numbers are not.

Employees consistently rated the performance on job attributes lower than the importance of those attributes on the employee satisfaction scales. The difference between the grand means for importance and performance on the job-motivators scales was .34 and on items associated with job-hygienes it was .40 (Table 2). These data are displayed visually in the importance-performance grid in Figure 1. The axes for this grid were drawn at the mean values of 3.7 and 4.05 for the performance and importance items, respectively. These graphic data show that among job hygienes, employees were most dissatisfied with wages and benefits (#17), raises and awards (#20), and feedback on job performance (#23). However, some of the dissatisfaction with remuneration appears to have been ameliorated by good working conditions (#16) and positive relationships with supervisors and co-workers (#15). Figure 1 indicates that these two latter items were subsequently more important to employees than were the raises, awards, and feedback items, suggesting that, even though Herzberg categorized them as hygienes, they had a compensatory effect.

Table 4: Results of Factor Analysis and Reliability Tests

| Item Statements | Factor Loadings |
|---|-----------------|
| Assurance (Cronbach's Alpha: .83) | |
| 1. Employees who understand and take into account the needs of individuals | .78 |
| 2. Staff's sincere interest in solving patrons' problems | .76 |
| 3. Politeness and courtesy of employees | .68 |
| 4. Well informed employees who are able to answer customers' questions | .64 |
| 5. Skilled and knowledgeable employees | .50 |
| Reliability & Tangibles (Cronbach's Alpha: .64) | |
| 6. Providing enough lanes in swimming pools so that those swimming laps are not crowded | .63 |
| 7. Lifeguards who are attentive at all times | .55 |
| 8. Clean and well maintained facilities | .55 |
| 9. Clean and sanitary shower and locker room | .50 |
| 10. Regularly scheduled times when users know certain facilities are open and not reserved for classes or groups | .39 |
| Responsiveness (Cronbach's Alpha: .72) | |
| 11. Convenient operating hours | .77 |
| 12. Quick and easy check in at the front desk | .70 |
| 13. Staff showing new users around the facilities and demonstrating the use of exercise equipment to those interested | .50 |
| Equipment Status (Cronbach's Alpha: .71) | |
| 14. Prompt repairs of broken equipment or facilities | .58 |
| 15. Good working condition of facilities and equipment | .56 |

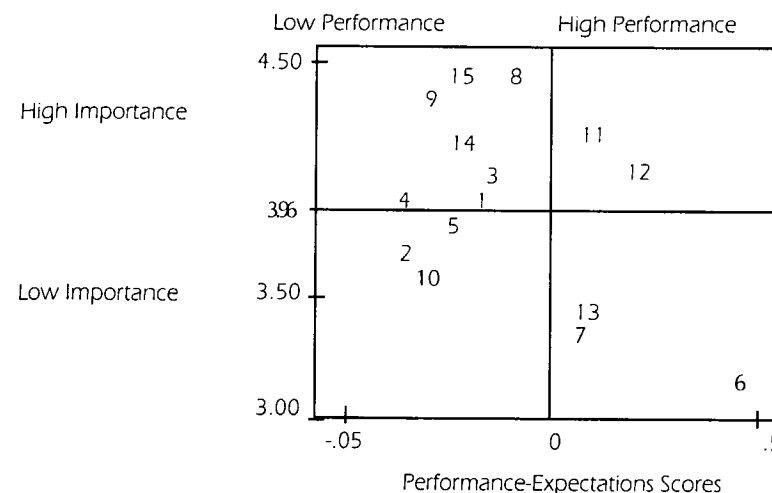
Table 4 reports the results of an oblique factor analysis undertaken on the performance-minus-expectations gap scores of items on the service quality scales. These procedures were consistent with those followed by the developers of the SERVQUAL scale (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Four of the

items did not load saliently and, thus, were discarded from the analysis. It was noted earlier in the paper that an effort was made in selecting these items to reflect the five SERVQUAL dimensions, and these efforts influenced the authors' interpretation of the factors that are shown in Table 4. The empathy domain did not emerge from the analysis, and the items selected to reflect reliability and tangibles merged onto a single factor. Two items that did not load saliently on any other factor but did load together were termed "equipment status." The Cronbach-alpha reliability coefficients for these exploratory domains were considered adequate for them to be interpreted as scales in Table 5.

Table 5: Visitor Perceptions of Service Quality

| Dimensions and Scale Items | Importance | Performance | Expectation | Performance - Expectation |
|---|------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------------|
| Assurance | | | | |
| 1. Employees who understand and take into account the needs of individuals | 3.96 | 3.61 | 3.80 | -.19 |
| 2. Staff's sincere interest in solving patrons' problems | 3.92 | 3.57 | 3.83 | -.26 |
| 3. Politeness and courtesy of employees | 4.13 | 3.78 | 3.93 | -.15 |
| 4. Well informed employees who are able to answer customers' questions | 3.97 | 3.63 | 3.93 | -.30 |
| 5. Skilled and knowledgeable employees | 3.94 | 3.63 | 3.83 | -.20 |
| Grand Means | 3.99 | 3.65 | 3.86 | -.21 |
| Reliability & Tangibles | | | | |
| 6. Providing enough lanes in swimming pools so that those swimming laps are not crowded | 3.16 | 3.80 | 3.33 | .47 |
| 7. Lifeguards who are attentive at all times | 3.51 | 3.77 | 3.75 | .02 |
| 8. Clean and well maintained facilities | 4.46 | 4.30 | 4.32 | -.02 |
| 9. Clean and sanitary shower and locker room | 4.41 | 4.16 | 4.38 | -.22 |
| 10. Regularly scheduled times when users know certain facilities are open and not reserved for classes or groups | 3.64 | 3.56 | 3.67 | -.11 |
| Grand Means | 3.83 | 3.92 | 3.89 | .03 |
| Responsiveness | | | | |
| 11. Convenient operating hours | 4.31 | 4.20 | 4.13 | .07 |
| 12. Quick and easy check in at the front desk | 4.16 | 4.25 | 4.05 | .20 |
| 13. Staff showing new users around the facilities and demonstrating the use of exercise equipment to those interested | 3.59 | 3.60 | 3.56 | .04 |
| Grand Means | 4.02 | 4.01 | 3.91 | .10 |
| Equipment Status | | | | |
| 14. Prompt repairs of broken equipment or facilities | 4.22 | 3.87 | 4.07 | -.20 |
| 15. Good working condition of facilities and equipment | 4.46 | 4.25 | 4.38 | -.13 |
| Grand Means | 4.34 | 4.06 | 4.22 | -.16 |

Figure 2: Results of Evaluation of Service Quality



The key to item numbers on this grid is given in Table 5.

The service quality data reported in Table 5 are plotted in Figure 2. The axis for the performance score is drawn at the zero point and shows that there were five items on which performance exceeded expectations, which may be interpreted to mean high service quality. The importance axis was drawn at 3.96, which was the mean of the importance items. The performance-minus-expectations gap scores were used as the performance scores on the horizontal axis.

The two service quality items that were important to users and that were scored high in performance were convenient operating hours (#11) and quick and easy check-in at the front desk (#12). These were major strengths of the center.

Seven items appear in the critical upper left quadrant of the figure that identifies items considered to be of relatively high importance by users, but on which they perceive the agency's performance to be relatively low. Four appear to be attributable to the heavy use of the facility in that they indict the working conditions of facilities and equipment (#15), cleanliness of showers and locker rooms (#9), cleanliness and maintenance of facilities (#8), and the speed at which equipment and facilities are repaired (#14). The other three items needing attention, but to a lesser extent, were all employee related (#4, #3, #1).

Item 6 was providing enough lanes in swimming pools so that these individuals' swimming laps are not crowded. Figure 2 shows it is an outlier, perceived to be very high performance but low in importance, which

suggests an inefficient use of resources. The center has a magnificent 50-meter competition pool and separate diving well. These facilities are usually configured into 30 or more 25-yard lanes. There is rarely an occasion when all the lanes have an individual in them, which accounts for the relatively high service quality score. However, the low use it receives by general users of the center accounts for its low importance to those visitors. These data suggest that the capacity of the aquatic facility is excessive for meeting the needs of the majority of the center's users. However, its design was dictated by the need to accommodate top-class swimming competitions rather than casual use.

Concluding Comments

The IRME instrument used in this study has distinctive conceptual advantages over both the ISME instrument from which it is adapted and existing audit measures available in the parks and recreation field. It extends the original ISME instrument from which it is derived by placing more emphasis on internal marketing, by including the Herzberg et al. (1959) scales, and by tailoring the scale items specifically to recreation centers. At the same time, it is superior to previous audit measures that have appeared in the park and recreation literature because it is shorter (and therefore more user friendly); it is quantitative rather than qualitative, which better facilitates comparisons over time; and it incorporates internal marketing and service quality measures, rather than being confined only to assessing effectiveness of the external marketing function.

Implications derived from the case study results are not generalizable but are briefly summarized here to illustrate the type of insights that might be forthcoming from use of the audit. Two main insights emerged from the external marketing scales. First, managers who were responsible for establishing policies and procedures were more convinced than employees of their effectiveness. Second, users were significantly less enamored than employees, and in some cases managers, with the way they were treated. The internal marketing scales highlighted wages and benefits, raises and awards, and feedback on job performance as items that employees thought needed to be addressed, while good working conditions and positive relations with supervisor and co-workers were strengths. The main service quality items that needed attention related to cleanliness and maintenance of the facility and were probably attributable to its heavy use.

The results of this case study suggest that for the conceptual advantages of the IRME instrument to be realized, further development of its scales is necessary. The Cronbach's alphas for some of the scales are relatively low, probably because of the small number of items on some of them. Increasing the number of items to improve internal consistency is a necessary future step. Qualitative research methods are likely to be useful in clarifying existing items and selecting additional items for the scales. The qualitative approach should include focus groups interviews prior to developing the

instrument so any unique aspects of a center's service delivery can be identified and included in the audit. In addition, the instrument needs to be tested in multiple settings to ascertain how generalizable it is likely to be.

Clearly, there is a need to improve the instrument for auditing service quality in a student recreation center. The principle of using an importance measure and of displaying the results visually on a performance/importance grid appears to be useful. However, further work is needed to determine if the five SERVQUAL dimensions are appropriate for use in a recreation center, to test the items used in this study in other contexts, and to explore whether additional items or domains not considered here should be included in the instrument.

Some of the items in this study that were given only to managers may have yielded additional insights if they had also been included in the employee surveys. Items in this category include numbers 1, 3, 5, 16, 20, and 22. They were excluded from the employees' survey because management who sanctioned the study advised that they were unlikely to yield useful information. However, in other contexts, employee responses to these items may be considered pertinent.

The use of audits is likely to grow, if relatively parsimonious but effective instrumentation can be developed. Most managers are interested in knowing "where are we now?", and the audit offers a mechanism for improving what an agency is doing. The audit is a basic tool for monitoring and improving marketing effectiveness. After each use, the longitudinal trend lines can be extended and the agency can see the extent to which its marketing efforts have improved over time. For an agency to obtain most insight from the audit process, the instrument should be administered periodically (annually). The first use of it establishes a base level from which the agency can monitor its performance. It is a diagnostic tool that identifies the areas in which most attention should be focused. The trouble areas need to be followed up with focus groups so all dimensions of the issue are understood and ideas from the impacted group on how to proceed to improve the situation can be solicited.

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Programs that Work

Ground Zero: A Collaborative Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Program for At-Risk Adolescents

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Executive Summary: Research has indicated that the increase in violence and crime among juveniles can be linked directly to an increase in substance abuse among adolescents (Office of Substance Abuse Prevention, 1990). There has been a significant increase in youth violence that includes drive-by shootings, harassment and intimidation of school students, weapons in the schools, and adolescent involvement in local drug trafficking (Fort Worth Gang Research Project, 1993). Researchers have linked such deviant behaviors with numerous risk factors such as being the child of a substance abuser, committing a violent or delinquent act, or abusing alcohol or drugs (OSAP, 1990). These risk factors help define the "at-risk youth." Many recreation programs are designed to address the needs of at-risk adolescents by providing such outcomes as increased self-esteem, freedom of choice, skill development, and physical activity. Although these outcomes are beneficial to adolescents, without providing knowledge and skills to combat the risk factors that are so pervasive in these adolescents' lives, the full benefit of the recreation program may not be realized. By integrating recreation programs with educational activities, adolescents may be more successful in attaining the desired outcomes of the recreation programs.

Ground Zero, sponsored by the Tarrant Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, is a substance-abuse prevention and intervention program for at-risk adolescents. It is offered in collaboration with various recreation and other youth-service agencies. The program focuses on increasing skills and information needed to expand adolescents' choices for enhancing the quality of their lives. Ground Zero's effectiveness is apparent given the significant increases in scores from the beginning to the end of the programs. Adolescents gained knowledge of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, chemical dependency, community resources, and dealing with substance abuse within the family, as well as increased their own self-esteem through participation in Ground Zero. In addition, family members and friends of substance abusers have increased their knowledge of coping skills and community resources for their own support. By reaching 25,553 people, Ground Zero has impacted communities supporting adolescents. Tarrant Council received \$365,000 from the Texas Commission on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse to initiate Ground Zero. There is no charge to adolescents and families. Program components are provided by eight