

# Development of the Administered Public Recreation Marketing Concept

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**ABSTRACT:** - The article focuses on four major assumptions that underlie the alternative conceptualization of public recreation marketing. It explains (1) the redistribution system within recreation resources are allocated; (2) the organizational structure of recreation agencies; (3) the ways in which public recreation agencies interact with local governments and citizens; and (4) the code of ethics and its influence on the behavior of recreation professionals. Finally, the article attempts to integrate these assumptions into an alternative definition of public recreation marketing that is termed "administered marketing."

**KEYWORDS:** - marketing, public sector, recreation.

## INTRODUCTION

Public administration scholars have actively sought to develop new, or borrow and adapt existing, private sector tools and concepts. Thus, public recreation administrators have sought to understand, and have attempted to transfer, commercial marketing tools and concepts to the fundamentally different operational environment of the public sector [7].

### Evolution of the Problem

Hunt stated the problem: Thus, the major *substantive* problem concerning broadening the concept of marketing lies in the area of *marketing* to nonmarketers. (italics original) [6:24]. During the subsequent two decades the "marketing to nonmarketers" problem in the context of the public sector, has split public administrators into two camps comprised of its supporters and opponents. Thus, Roberto [8], an active proponent of marketing, observed: "Marketing's recent and growing participation in public sector management has received a bipolar love-hate evaluation." The opponents' position was perhaps best articulated by Walsh who suggested the need to redefine public marketing "...if it is to be specifically public service marketing rather a pale imitation of a private sector approach within the public sector." [11]

### Conceptualization of Public Recreation Marketing

Crompton [2] defined recreation marketing as: "a set of activities aimed at facilitating and expediting exchanges with target markets." This conceptualization of recreation marketing rests on several fundamental concepts: (1) the organization as a resource converting mechanism, (2) voluntary exchange, (3) the notion of publics, (4) the marketing mix, (5) the marketing environment, and (6) equity.

In these definitions, voluntary exchange is presented as the only plausible conceptual option available to the recreation agency for attracting, converting and distributing resources. Thus, exchange is considered to be the central concept underlying recreation marketing [9].

### Limitations of the Conceptualizations

Godale argued that concern with increasing financial resources in a public recreation agency tends to shift the focus of managerial attention towards immediate financial considerations at the expense of social objectives [4].

Opponents of marketing argue that application of the marketing philosophy to increase revenues and

improve efficiency distorts public recreation agency objectives, contradicts the social service ethic, and invites commercialization of the public recreation field. Godbey contends that “marketing public services differs from similar efforts in the commercial sector in a fundamental way—the public sector must market for more than economic profit.” [5:56].

### **Development of an alternative conceptualization**

#### *The Redistribution System of Recreation Resources*

Von Mises once ironically observed: “The truth is that the government cannot give if it does not take from somebody.” [10]. For generations, property and sales taxes levied on citizens have been the primary sources of both operational and capital funds for public recreation agencies. The annual collection of taxes and the expenditures of some of them on recreation services confirm that the recreation field is part of the public sector, which also has been referred to as the bureaucratic or redistributive sector [3].

#### *The Public Recreation Organization*

In contrast to profit oriented recreation organizations that tend to be open-ended systems with wide discretion, public recreation agencies tend to be closed-ended systems with a relatively narrowly defined mission. Both private and public recreation agencies render useful services to the community. However, evidence of the usefulness of these services for the community is determined differently. In the case of private profit-seeking organizations, usefulness of their services is determined by citizens’ willingness to pay the price asked for them. If they are willing to pay, then production of such services grows until saturation of the market is reached, at which point the factors of production will shift toward other services that are in greater demand.

The profit motive and price structure of the market serve as a sensitive compass to organizations indicating the right amount of services to produce, and the right services in which to invest money. Under these circumstances management of profit seeking organizations tends to be flexible, discrete,

and de-centralized because anything that may slow down the organization’s ability to adapt to changing customer preferences may be fatal to the continued viability of the organization. It is not management that lays off employees and dissolves profit-seeking organizations, it is the disapproval of the organization’s customers that results in an excess of costs over revenues that leads to such actions[9].

#### *The Interaction with its Environment*

Many conceptualizations of public sector or nonprofit marketing tend to be based on the exchange concept that invites an economic type of analysis. From a redistribution system perspective, the exchange interpretation of public sector marketing is inadequate. First, it shows only a small proportion of the full set of relationships that exist between government and citizens, by focusing only on the direct organization-service beneficiary relationships. According to this perspective, the agency is the center of the universe and government is a sputnik rotated around the agency. This is the microeconomic system type of analysis where marketing refers to agency A inducing behavior in interest group B, not for B’s benefit, but for A’s since success of A’s marketing efforts is measured by profit earned by A. Because the organization is the primary unit of such an analysis the administrative role of government is minimized and limited, so the public parks and recreation agency is incorrectly perceived to be the initiator of all marketing efforts and government is incorrectly perceived as an implicit constraint to such efforts.

#### *The Motivation of Recreation Professionals*

There are arguments that suggest that a public recreation agency should be driven by concerns for the public interest rather than by employees’ self-interest. In the private firm individuals combine for the primary aim of making a profit. Von Mises noted that: “under the profit motive every industrial aggregate, no matter how big it may be, is in a position to organize its whole business and each part of it in such a way that the spirit of capitalist acquisitiveness permeates it from top to bottom.” The interpretation of self-interest motivation as

giving license to an unlimited spirit of acquisitiveness has been criticized as being immoral, egotistic, and selfish [10:54].

The American Society for Public Administration's (ASPA) Code of Ethics was developed as a set of moral principles in 1981 by the Society for Public Administration's National Council. The first topic "Serve the public interest" encourages public servants to "serve the public, beyond serving oneself."

### **The Concept of Administered Marketing**

Redistribution is the central concept underlying administrative marketing. A city council, as an elected and commonly recognized political authority collects property and sale taxes from citizens and deposits them into the general fund. After taxes have been collected, they are distributed among the different services delivered to the community. Government establishes the department of parks and recreation, finances it, determines its goals, mission, and rules, and authorizes it to provide services for the community including some that require fees. A department of parks and recreation is a bureaucratic closed-system agency with a clearly defined mission, moral principles, hierarchical structure, and internal arrangements designed to effectively implement the mission.

A professional administrative marketer is someone who seeks to understand, plan, and manage redistributive arrangements. She or he would not be expected to focus upon selling the agency's services and generating revenue, but to look at the agency, its mission, and its problems in a rational manner: identifying objectives; discovering the recreational needs of citizens through research; weighing the opportunities and constraints; determining the resources available to the agency and exploring alternative sources of resources; examining the various ways, in which client requirements can be met and the amount of human resources and type work that needs to be done. All of this is embraced in the following definition of administered marketing:

Administered marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of programs designed to facilitate redistributive arrangements within a community for the purpose of achieving established community objectives.

### **CONCLUSION**

This perspective discards both the voluntary exchange of values and marketing concept as means for meeting visitors' needs. According to these conceptualizations, marketing is a set of tools designed to induce behavior change. From this premise, the marketing concept is defined as inducing changes in existing patterns of behavior. Persuasive communications and adapting to existing patterns of behavior are seen as marketing's two primary characteristics. This perspective distinguishes between a core area of mission and an augmented mission and argues that tools of persuasion are central to achieving the core area of mission, while marketing and sales orientations are appropriate for the augmented mission activities [1].

Administered marketing is a synergetic concept. It accepts the premise of supporters of exchange conceptualizations that marketing is a management technology. However, it rejects the concept of voluntary exchange as being universal and as underlying all of marketing activities. Instead, it recognizes the concept of redistribution, but does not accept that it is merely another form of exchange. Economic anthropologists, historians and public scholars derive it from the classic notion of redistribution with all the rules and premises that comprise this system.

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