# Designing sport and recreation programming: Towards enhancing customers' participation in tourism industry

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#### Abstract

Programme planning and management are essential elements in assuring the success of leisure services for people of all ages and backgrounds. One of the hallmarks of good programming in sport and recreation is the extent to which how well an organization manages its resources and organizes activities to meet the wants and needs of different people and different groups. In this paper, I will examine the fundamental thrust of sport and recreation related to management planning by focusing on a related programming models. Thus, an approach to sport and recreational programming model adapted from the available literature will be emphasized. Apart from understanding the programming model, there is a need to better understand the application of marketing strategies for sport and recreation programmes that provided by the tourism industry which can be regarded as triggers and anchors of the engagement process. I will also outline of the issues and challenges in programming sport and recreational activities. Finally, the suggestions towards enhancing customers' participation in sport and recreational activities in tourism industry will be discussed.

Key words: sport and recreation, management, programming, marketing, tourism industry.

#### Introduction

Today, vast numbers of people participate in sport and recreation activities and almost everyone aspires to a holiday. Though the connections between sport and tourism have long been established, the relationship is now gaining global significance. Media attention has increased and people are becoming more aware of the health and recreational benefits that sport and tourism provide. The relationship between sport and tourism in the modern world is symbiotic. It is not simply that sport furthers tourism by offering an ever increasing range of valued visitor experiences; tourism also aids sport. (Standeven & De Knop, 1999). The relationship between sport and tourism further explained by Svrcular (2002) as follows:

- > Tourism enterprises (e.g. hotels and resorts) sell sport as a recreational activity, but rarely employ sports professionals to manage this component.
- > Sport enterprises regard the tourism component of travel as a necessary evil.
- > The relationship between sport and tourism will inevitable grow in the years to come, and at all levels.

Changes in the international travel market lead to an increasing variety of tourist types, needs, and patterns (Martin & Mason, 1987). Adventure and activity holidays are recognized and becoming a growing segment of the tourist industry (Terry, 1996; World Tourism Organization, 1985). The growth in adventure tourism has fuelled the

development of recreation and sport as being a central focus for a growing number of holiday experiences (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2005).

People do not simply sit around on the beach on holiday any more, but increasingly engage in a wide range of recreational and sporting activities. This interest in recreation and sport has also been fuelled by the increasing emphasis of individuals on their health, well being and weight control, a movement which continues to grow in the beginning of the twenty-first century. Thus, recreational sport activities are acknowledged as an important and potentially health-enhancing activity for which tourism can be the catalyst (Glyptis, 1991), and hence, health care and providing services for physical activities have become an important part of the tourism industry.

Sport as part of business hospitality is big, profitable, and growing, with most of the clients are sports' enthusiast. Therefore, hotels and travel agents are always on the lookout for new markets as a way of broadening their business. In relation to that, fitness and health conscious among the tourists who travel as part of their leisure or business have made a significant impact on all forms of travel and entertainment. Jolley and Curphey (1994) (cited in Standeven and DeKnop, 1999) report that the six thousand agents who were at the 'American Society of Travel Agents' World Travel Congress in Portugal in 1994 identified the sports sector as a major growth market of niche travel.

#### Sport and Recreation in Tourism Industry

Leisure is a term that has been used to encompass a whole series of experiences that people can undertake in their free time. Edginton, Hudson, Dieser and Edginton (2004) in their analysis of the literature on defining leisure reveal seven primary orientations—as free time; as an activity; as a state of mind; as a symbol of social class; as action; as an end in itself (antiutilitalian); and holistically. However, not the aim of this paper to discuss the different viewed regarding the leisure concepts. What to be the focus here is on sport and recreation which is usually thought of as a wholesome activity pursued during one's leisure. Individuals spend time both in the home and out of the home in recreational sport activities. There has been a growth in the number of recreational sport activities that people can engage in at home as more free time has become available to them. Individuals have also put an increasing emphasis on out-of-home recreational sport activities whether they are in the home or away from the home. There has been a growth of private leisure centers, for example people can engage in recreational sport or health and fitness programmes.

As far as the provision of out-of-home leisure is concerned, two very important sectors of the total leisure sector are tourism and hospitality. Tourism is defined as a short-term movement of people to places some distance from their normal place of residence to indulge in pleasurable experiences and activities. Tourism is an activity serviced by a number of other industries such as hospitality and transport. Hospitality involves looking after guest well. In other words, the sector also involves all the organizations that are involved in providing services for guests (hotels, resorts, inns, restaurants and other recreational activities). In this paper, 1 will focus on designing sport and recreation programmes in the service sector such as hotels and resorts.

In the twenty-first century, the fitness-and health-conscious baby boomers who travel as part of their business have made a significant impact on all forms of travel and entertainment. Airlines, car rental, and other travel services are yielding to the demands of the health fitness-conscious consumer. No smoking venues are now the mode. Vendors no longer consider heart healthy food menus novel and bothersome. Hotels designed to market the business travel are expanding to provide fitness facilities (Grantham, Patton, York, & Winick, 1998). Historically, the four or five stars hotels provided only a pool to accommodate family recreation needs. Now, hotels with fully equipped exercise facilities are becoming commonplace. The upscale hotels with an affluent guest market and convention trade are frequently developed full-scale spa services to supplement their fitness facilities. Some are even attempting to become destination resorts where they provide golf, tennis, and spa services. Hotels without direct access to such services as golf and tennis frequently develop joint ventures with clubs where guests may use their golf and tennis facilities on a preferred or reduced-cost basis. Most hotel-based facilities combine a membership programme comprised of local residents and nearby business professionals to complement the hotel resort clientele. In short, the traveling publics are expecting no compromise to their lifestyle when away from home on business or for pleasure. This trend will probably continue for the foreseeable future.

#### **Sport and Recreation Programming**

The sport and recreation programme concept may have different meanings for different people. Rossman (1995) writes that "a programme is a designed opportunity for a leisure experience to occur" (p. 3). Therefore, programmes can be thought of as the raison d'etre of any leisure service organization. Programmes are created to deliver something of value —a benefit or the expectation of a benefit to a customer or group of customers (Edginton, Jordan, Degraaf & Edginton, 1995). In this paper, sport and recreation programmes refer to the full range of organized and structured leisure experiences offer by hotels and resorts, as well as the unstructured or unsupervised used of play areas, sports facilities, and other indoor or outdoor recreation settings. It may refer to activities carried on throughout the year, during a specific season, for a limited term, or on a single occasion.

Programming involves arranging social, physical, and natural environments in such a way as to produce leisure experiences. Edginton and Rossman (1988) write that "... programming involves the creation and distribution of activities, areas and facilities, information and leadership opportunities" (p. viii). In other words, programming involves more than the creation of activities or events. More specifically, Kraus (1997) defined programming is the process that uses the human, fiscal, and other physical resources of an agency to provide recreation and leisure activities and services to community residents or to members/customers of an organization. Likewise, according to Torkildsen (2000), programming is a process of leisure management planning that uses resources and organizes activities to meet the diverse wants and needs of different people and different groups.

Therefore, programming is important in leisure management. It is a complex process requiring excellent management. Programming must achieve optimal use of existing

resources – facilities, personnel and finance – to meet the goals of the organization and the needs of people. There are several reasons for excellent programming in sport and recreation in tourism industry. Torkildsen (2000) listed as follows:

- 1. There is a need to make the best use of resources time, space, staff, money.
- 2. There is a need to resolve conflicting claims of time and space.
- 3. Most leisure facilities have potential permutations in which to exploit and provide opportunities.
- 4. Space not programmed and sold today is lost for ever.
- 5. There is a need for balance and for fairness between a wide range of potential customers.
- 6. Good programming is a means of achieving best results optimum numbers, a range of different people and a choice of activities.
- 7. The programme provides order and structure; people know where they stand they know when to come, what they can expect.
- 8. Without programming, there could be chaos, no order, no structure, no balance and unfairness, and resources will not be used to best advantage.

Although many benefits can be gained from participation in leisure and recreation programmes and services, numerous leisure professionals and educators (e.g. Dieser, 2002; Dustin, McAvoy, and Goodale, 1999; Moore, 2002; Wearing, 1998) wisely posited that leisure services also provide negative experiences if they lack proper or competent programming. For example, a poorly designed outdoor recreation trip (e.g. lack of a risk management plan) can cause physical harm to participants. In additional, a sport and recreation facilities and equipments that is not accessible to customers who use wheelchairs can cause these customers psychological harm, such as feeling of exclusion and isolation.

The importance of leisure and recreation programming has been widely received attention and interest of the service providers in tourism industry. A number of leisure-service authors have identified leisure and recreation programming approaches for leisure-service agencies to adopt. Howard Danford (1964) identified four such models; (1) the traditional approach; (2) the current-practices model; (3) the expressed desires model; and (4) the authoritarian approach. In addition to such approaches, James Murphy (1989) identified two other programme-planning models: (1) the cafeteria approach; and (2) the prescriptive approach.

It is helpful to identify the most influential sport and recreation programme planning approaches today, in terms that are as simple and realistic as possible. Three influential contemporary approaches are the quality-of-life, human-service, and marketing models of leisure-service programming. However, in an effort to synthesize the key features of each of the preceding three approaches to sport and recreation-programme planning, a growing number of professionals and educators have begun to present a benefit-driven model of programming (Kraus, 1997). While this is a relatively new approach, it has been widely featured at professional conferences and in publications, and it seems probable that it will be adopted more widely in the years ahead (Edginton et al., 2004).

The benefit-driven approach model (Kraus, 1997) consists of seven-step in the leisure and recreation programming. Each of the seven steps of the process for sport and recreation development is briefly described here, to provide a preliminary understanding of the sequence.

#### 1. Established agency's mission or philosophical base

The mission's is made explicit in a constitution or set of bylaws, charter, enabling legislation or other formal statement of purpose pertinent to the sport and recreation programmes and activities of the organization.

#### 2. Assess participant and community needs and interests

A systematic assessment of customers'/consumers' needs. This assessment may be done through a variety of techniques (e.g. environmental scans) that examine the views and leisure-related wishes of customers/consumers of the organization.

#### 3. Identify specific programme goals and objectives

Identify the goals and objectives that organization should strive to meet in its programme offerings. Goals are broad statements of purpose, while objectives are concrete, short-term, measurable statements of projected accomplishments or programme outcomes.

#### 4. Explore full range of programme possibilities

It may includes different types of sports and games, outdoor recreation pursuits, cultural arts, and social programmes and hobbies. Four questions should be considered by managers or professionals are:

Will this activity be of interest to customers/consumers?

Does it fulfills to the organization goals and objectives?

Does it meet the needs of various group of consumers?

Are other organizations already offering such activities? If so, is there a need to do so?

#### 5. Formulate detailed programme plan

It involves decision making ranging from authoritarian action to a shared participative approach to outline a detailed programme structure. The programme plan may includes activities, with a designation of their locations, schedules, formats, and the populations to be served; a time frame; staff and facility assignments, and fiscal projection.

#### 6. Programme implementation

This is the action-oriented, service-delivery phase of the programming process. It includes publicity, registration, and ongoing supervision.

#### 7. Programme monitoring and evaluation

Evaluate programme, with continuing feedback for programme modifications, and recommendations for future action.

The benefit-driven model emphasizes the need to define clearly the goals, purposes, and positive outcomes of programmes, to focus sharply on achieving these benefits, and to systematically measure the degree to which they have been achieved. This approach to programme delivery has been used to guide recreational policy planning and management, advance leisure theory and research, and contribute to agency operation (Kraus, 1997).

## Sport and Recreation Programme Management

The provision and management of sport and recreation in the tourism industry is crucial, so that correct choices of programmes and activities are made to match consumer demands in the first place. The effective and efficient management of the sport and recreation in the service sector (e.g. hotels and resorts) is also crucial so that both the consumers and the organization can prosper in the long term to bring positive benefits to all.

Management is the process of achieving organizational goals by engaging in the functions of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling (Grantham et al., 1998; Park & Quarterman, 2003). Although these functions form the basis of the managerial process, several other elements contribute to an understanding of how sport and recreation managers operate. In regard to that, the sport and recreation managers should have some knowledge of management theories. By understanding historical viewpoints (classical, behaviour, quantitative), modern managers not only can learn valuable lessons, but also can avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

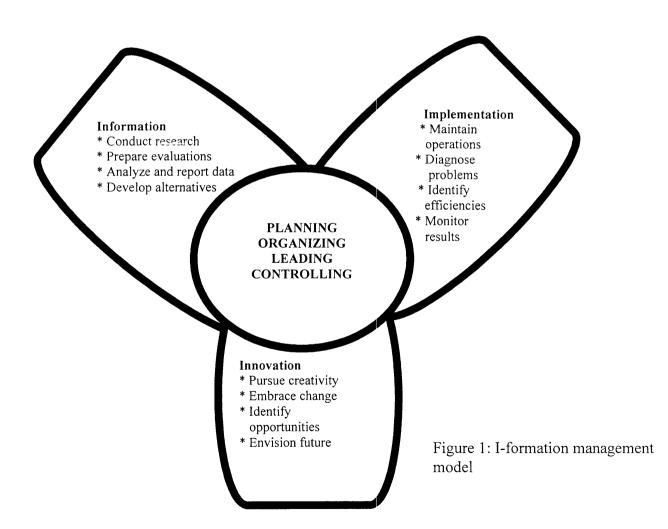
Innovations in management theory continue to evolve from earlier viewpoints and from new and unique ideas. Although many new ideas do not yet have the stature of representing a school of thought, the emerging views may provide sport and recreation managers with useful tools for addressing contemporary challenges. Among the contemporary viewpoints are system theory, contingency theory, emerging view and I-formation management model. In this paper, I will emphasize on the I-formation management theory that has been identified by Grantham, Patton, York, and Winick, (1998) as the current and future framework for developing individual management skill. The I-formation management theory was a theoretical model that defines and evaluates the sport and recreation management responsibilities.

According to the I-formation management model, the management process involves four basic functions: planning and decision making, organizing, leading, and controlling. Planning is identifying an organization's goals and deciding how to achieve them; organizing is the grouping of activities and resources in a logical manner; leading is the process of getting people to achieve the organization's goal; and controlling is the monitoring of the organization's progress towards the goals (Grantham et al., 1998). Therefore, the sport and recreation managers must develop the tools and skills to perform the basic management functions and be prepared to face the challenges of a rapidly changing industry. The I-formation management model defines the functions of management as a dynamic relationship involving three dimensions: information, implementation, and innovation. We can use the I-formation model to define and evaluate

the overall organization, subgroups within the organization, and the individual managers. The model is represented graphically in figure 1 by three overlapping spheres, indicating the interrelationship of the three dimensions (Grantham et al., 1998).

The I-formation model illustrates that effective organizations must consistently focus on three separate but related dimensions of management responsibility to effectively perform the four primary managerial functions. The dynamic characteristic of the model comes from the aspect that each of the three dimensions requires continuous input from the other two in order to be effective (Grantham et al., 1998). The following three I-formation questions should challenge every level of the management process:

- 1. Information Is appropriate information available and being used in support of the decision, action, and goal?
- 2. Implementation Is the most efficient and effective approach to implementation in place or planned?
- 3. Innovation Have the existing assumptions been confronted by and survived the challenge of innovative ideas?



Perhaps the best way to understand sport and recreation management is to examine the various settings in which programmes are managed and operated. For example, the community setting which consists of hotels, resorts, parks and recreation departments that offer sport and recreation, fitness and health programmes in many of their community recreation centers. Some hotels and resorts are increasingly attractive to guests because of newly developed fitness and recreation complexes complete with exercise equipment, spas, and other amenities. This is especially true in the large hotels catering to corporate guests or convention business. The magnitude of the community setting in providing sport and recreation, and health fitness services is enormous. There are some community settings afford good exposure to programming.

Managing sport and recreation programming requires skillful management. Therefore, it is important that the manager of the organizations to familiarize and practice effective management process in sport and recreation. In relation to that, here I will focus specifically with planning, implementing, and evaluating the programmes or programming that occurs within the sport and recreation in tourism industry setting. Programming that is professionally planned and implemented will keep the consumers active in a facility long and participating in the activities that has been designed by the organizations. Quality programming that offers opportunities for fun and social interaction, while enhancing the probability of meeting personal fitness and wellness goal, will keep the consumers in the organizations to repeat their usage of the facilities or activities provided. Furthermore, innovative programming that is professionally delivered is a powerful weapon in the ongoing battle for consumer retention (Grantham et al., 1998).

Strategic planning is vital as it helps the sport and recreation manager or professional identify and meet the market's changing demands for sport and recreation programmes. Therefore, the managers in a hotels and resorts must be innovative to meet the current and future demands of their customers and consumers. Unfortunately, many managers do not follow the necessary steps in planning and implementation to produce consistent, quality programmes. Patton, Corry, Gettman and Graf (1986) produced a generic model that delineates the steps of a strategic management plan necessary to consistently produce quality programming. This four-stage management plan involves the following steps as shown in figure 2:

- 1. Assessing needs and interests
- 2. Planning the programmes
- 3. Implementing the programmes
- 4. Evaluating the programmes to ensure that the organization's sport and recreation mission is well organized and purposeful.

However, the programme development depends on the mission of the organization, the objectives of the programme, and the target market for which the programme is intended. The ultimate success of the organization often depends on the quality of the personnel planning and on effectively implementing the programming for the facility. Therefore, to

produce consistent high quality programming, the leisure provider/organization should constantly cycle the four stage management process illustrated in figure 2.

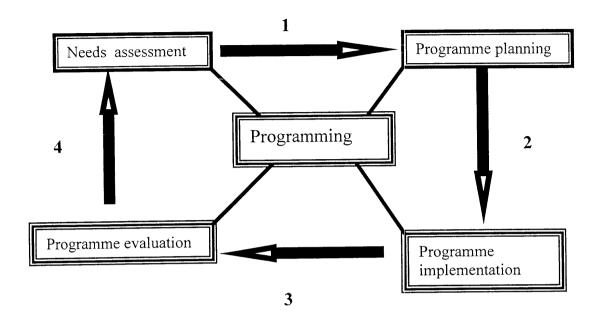


Figure 2: Basic components of successful quality programming

#### 1. Needs assessments

The first stage in planning and developing sport and recreation programmes is to decide what programmes will fulfill the needs and interests of the customers/consumers. Therefore, the sources of needs and interests information that you could discover are; a) conducting a market survey and analyses; b) input from the various related agencies; c) expert(s)'s perception of needs; d) feedback from existing programmes; and e) survey current participation.

## 2. Programme planning

Programme planning involves using the information from the needs and interests assessments to define specific programme goals and objectives from which you can establish programmes. Involve all sport and recreation staff members in programme planning, primarily because they are responsible for carrying out these programmes. In order to design a well organized programmes, you should consider all possible programmes variances such as — the timing of the programme, the number of customers expected to participate, the risk management plan, or subtle changes in the programme operation, to improve the outcome.

### 3. Programme implementation

The implementation of sport and recreation programmes in a hotel and resort involve the following:

- a. Reviewing the planned objectives for the programme
- b. Scheduling the programme tasks to meet these objectives
- c. Marketing and promoting the programmes
- d. Carrying out the assigned task.
- e. Examining staff leadership, marketing and promotion, internal and external resources, and follow-up plans.

#### 4. Programme evaluation

The fourth stage in the iterative process of managing a programme involves evaluation. You can use both types of programme evaluation – process evaluation and outcome evaluation. These two types of evaluation involve analyzing implementation tasks that were assigned to the staff to see a) if the tasks were accomplished (process evaluation), and b) if the objectives of the programme were met (outcome evaluation). Two general methods are used in measurement and evaluation –formative evaluation and summative evaluation.

#### Marketing Sport and Recreation Programming

One of the key aspects of the management activity in the twenty-first century is the development of effective marketing functions so that the correct services can be provided and its benefits can be communicated to prospective consumers (Watt, 1998). This is vital in the private sector where profitability is a central force. It is equally important in the public sector where the organization is trying to attract certain market segments to partake in their leisure activities. The best programmes will not succeed if nobody knows they exist (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2005; Edginton et al., 2004). In this section, I am going to focus on marketing practice of sport and recreation programmes and services in tourism industry.

Marketing is more than just selling or promoting. Kotler (1982) has suggested that selling finds on organization focusing inwardly on its programmes and services. Its primary goals to achieve large number in term of participation. The marketing orientation, on the other hand, is focused on consumer needs, wants, and desires. The work of the organization using a marketing orientation is directed towards producing customer satisfaction. Edginton, Hudson, Dieser and Edginton (2004) suggest that the marketing orientation (marketing mix) in leisure and recreation is a process that involves integrating five components as follows:

- 1. Product refers to the type of service that is produced by the leisure service organization. There are five types of products –areas and facilities, activities, information, leadership, and equipment and supplies.
- 2. Price The value of a service is often related to its price. There are multiple approaches to pricing.
- 3. Place The time and location of a service is a critical factor in the marketing mix. Convenience is extremely important.
- 4. Promotion promotion is a process of communication between the organization and the customer. Promotional efforts let people know what is available and its cost, location, time, and benefits.

5. Package – Different programmes and services can be packaged in different ways. This is referred to as the programme format. The form can vary, yet the content remain the same.

In addition, Watt (1998) has identified the following "P's" that are relevant to sport and recreation. These new concepts being: People; Physical evidence, Process, Programming, and Presentation.

Hence, developing the strategic plan for marketing and promoting programmes is an important step. In the past, sport and recreation managers and professional have been trained to know programme content and delivery. They have not been trained in marketing and promoting programmes. Currently, an increasing number of sport and recreation managers and professionals are becoming proficient at marketing and promotion.

In developing the strategic plan for marketing and promotion, Grantham, Patton, York and Winick (1998) have suggested by utilizing the same careful planning methods in program implementation as discussed in the earlier section of this paper. Generally, the marketing plan should include the following:

- Objectives
- > Strategies for programme promotion
- > Staff assignments in the promotional efforts
- > Target dates and a timetable of tasks
- > Resources to use in promoting programmes

Very simply, the marketing plan, having identified the aims and objectives to be achieved will look at all the factors in marketing mix and specify a strategy for achieving them. There are perhaps three key issues: staff training, involvement and understanding of the marketing process and the part they play in it. In particular it is important that the organization undertakes a SWOT analysis. This means that the organization should examine strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (Watt, 1998).

Basically, the task of marketing is to show clients what you have. Therefore, design promotional efforts to reveal the main features of your services and products. Make the theme of your organization evident in your marketing materials. Illustrate the quality of your staff, programmes, facilities, and equipment in your promotional information. Marketing involves projecting the image of how you want the clients to perceive your programme or organization. In spite of that, when promoting a new programme, the sport and recreation manager and professional should consider doing an in-house pilot project to provide the staff with opportunity to become familiar with the new programme before promoting and delivering it to consumers (Grantham et al., 1998).

## Issues and Challenges in Sport and Recreation Management

Many issues and challenges confront the managers and professionals in sport and recreation today. The widespread interest in sport and recreation by people in our society and the media has made many of these issues highly visible.

Four particularly important issues and challenges face by sport and recreation professionals in tourism industry today were discussed. First, professionals are faced with the challenge of promoting daily high-quality sport and recreation programmes and activities in tourism industry. Second challenge is to become more actively involved in public relations. Sport and recreation professionals in tourism industry must market their programmes. Third challenge is to attain the goals set forth in the report sport for all policy. These specific physical activity objectives focus on improving the health status of all Malaysians. If these objectives are to be achieved, each professional must make a personal commitment to work with professional organizations to accomplish this task and to be a role model exemplifying a healthy, active lifestyle. Lastly, promoting lifespan involvement in physical activity requires professionals to provide a diversity of services to individuals of all ages. Sport and recreation has the potential to enhance the health and quality of life of people of all ages. Helping individuals to realize this potential is one of the biggest challenges.

Nevertheless, the challenge for sport and recreation programmers in tourism industry is to provide leisure experiences that improve the quality of life of their sport and recreation consumers, and contribute to the development of their emotional, physical, social, and cognitive lives. At the same time, the sport and recreation programmers need to be aware of special societal needs related to race and ethnicity, sex and gender roles, disability, age, and related factors, with emphasis on recreation's important role as a health-related form of experience and social service.

#### Conclusion

Understanding the customer is essential to creating successful sport and recreation programmes. Knowledge of customer behaviour can assist the sport and recreation programmer in successfully meeting their needs. Perhaps first and most important is the need for the organization to position itself towards service with a foundation of the knowledge of customer behaviour (Edginton et al., 2004). In regard to that, the focus of marketing activities in the hotel and resort should determine which benefits individual customers or consumers perceive to be desirable.

Generally speaking, the awareness for physical activity and fitness is at an all-time high in most of the societies today and will continue to increase in the future. Therefore, the professionals will certainly have to stay abreast of the changes. If we are to deal with them, sport and recreation professionals must be knowledgeable about the field of sport and recreation, and be willing to assume leadership positions. Sport and recreation managers or professionals must understand these societal changes and plan their programmes and facilities in the organization. This will assist the organization in attracting and retaining customers because of the increased services offered.

Besides that, if the sport and recreation managers and professionals are to design leisure experiences pertaining to sport recreational programmes and activities that increase positive benefits and decrease negative benefits, it is imperative that they gain a solid understanding of professional practice (e.g. evaluation, leadership) and a thorough understanding of the body of knowledge (e.g. leisure theory, programming strategies) in recreation and leisure services (Edginton et al., 2004).

Finally, human resource development in tourism industry must analyze the current situation of relevant manpower needs and set forth some policies and strategies to be adopted if sport and recreation in tourism industry is to be in a position to face the challenges posed by the expected growth rates. Thus, the manner in which professionals deal with these issues and meet the challenges confronting them will influence the future of sport and recreation programming in the tourism industry.

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