



CALIFORNIA PARK & RECREATION SOCIETY



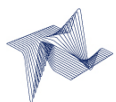
Executive Summary

Market Research to Support

CPRS Building the Brand Initiative

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Presented by



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

"Building the Brand," one of the California Park & Recreation Society's (CPRS) most vital projects, was initiated to provide CPRS members with compelling message and communications tools to use locally to build political, community and financial support.

However, "Building the Brand" did not address the highest priorities as to what parks and recreation *should* deliver and *does* deliver as perceived by California residents and elected officials. To uncover these perceptions, CPRS commissioned a comprehensive market research study, the results of which are to be used as the basis for a brand promise and new messaging to support local parks & recreation agencies. The promise and messaging are not to replace "Building the Brand," which targeted the profession, but to provide ways to communicate to and garner support among external stakeholders, that is, residents and elected officials.

The study was conducted in two phases: Phase 1 consisted of in-depth qualitative interviews, from which various statements on parks and recreation benefits were developed. Phase 2 was a quantitative Internet survey sent to 800 California residents, wherein respondents rated how they perceived the benefit statements as to their priority and delivery.

CPRS staff and the Brand Advisory Committee (BAC), an ad-hoc group of CPRS members, worked closely with the consultants and provided critical input and direction to the process.

Key Findings

Phase 1 Findings

1. "Parks" & "programs" are very different, and each has many different components that describe what constitutes a "park" or "program."
2. Most program users are also park users, but fewer park users utilize programs, and the benefits of one are not the same benefits of the other.
3. Users struggle to describe how parks & programs benefit their community or neighborhood, but more easily could do so on a personal level, and that of their family and friends.
4. Like the residents, elected officials described benefits mainly on a personal level, based on the experiences of individual constituents or themselves personally.

Phase 2 Findings

1. Based on how many and how often California households use parks & recreation programs, it is clear that these spaces, places, facilities & services are an essential component of the everyday lives of Californians. Virtually every Californian household, that is, 98%, reports having visited a park or participated in a program during the past year, and two in every three households did so at least once in the past month. In addition, half of California households (50%) reported that someone in their household participated in a structured park program at least once in the past year.
2. Echoing the Phase 1 findings, Californians more often prioritize the personal benefits over community or neighborhood benefits. Residents struggle to describe how parks & programs benefit their “community” or their “neighborhood,” but easily express, and prefer expressing the benefits on a personal level: the private, internal benefits to “me personally” or as an extension of the personal, to family and friends.
3. Frequent use combined with the feeling among users that the benefits are especially personal, rather than social, translates to strong, well-informed opinions about what should be prioritized (or most valued) and about what is, and is not currently delivered.
4. After soliciting these opinions (about what is most valued and how well the range of potential benefits is currently delivered) several conclusions can be drawn about *the highest priorities of Californians*.
 - ▶ Topping the list of the most highly valued/highest personal priorities is the preservation of, and access to, outdoor spaces
 - ▶ Two types of outdoor spaces are specifically indicated:
 - Space that is minimally developed, in a nearly natural state
 - Space with facilities for play (especially related to children), exercise and group sports (for both children and adults)
 - ▶ Non-structured (self-directed) use of these spaces is preferred by a majority of Californians, with one exception:
 - Californians placed a high priority on structured/directed activities and programs targeted to juveniles as a positive alternative to crime & mischief
 - ▶ Benefits that motivate these preferences are:
 - These types of spaces make a community a better place to live now and in the future

- The serenity and awe of nature must be available (to see, touch, smell, & hear) now and in the future
- Children, especially, and adults need outdoor spaces for play and for exercise
- Friends & family need these types of spaces for group sports

5. Next highly rated priorities include:

- ▶ Activities to facilitate social/community connections, advance human development, lifelong learning, and other social objectives.
- ▶ Non-sports programs & activities

Implications for Branding and Messaging

These findings have implications for how park & recreation agencies, on the whole, across the state might communicate messages that are congruent with resident opinions.

1. Personal versus Social Benefits

Both phases of this study found support for stressing the personal over the social benefits when developing messages to be used with the general public (as opposed to messages directed to professionals). In the priority rankings, Californians put the personal benefit statements atop the list. Social benefit statements are consistently ranked lower.

2. Self-Directed versus Directed Uses

The more widely held preferences favor self-directed benefits.

3. Discuss the Future

Virtually all of the highest priority statements have a connection to the future. "Make your community a better place to live now and in the future" was the highest ranked statement. As well, high priority was assigned to benefits for children, even by residents who don't have children. The two land preservation statements also reflect the future.

4. A Better Place to Live

The statement: "*Make your community a better place to live now and in the future*" turned out to be very powerful. It ranked very near the top of the priority list. What does it mean, especially given the position that residents expressed personal over community benefits? Given the context of the other highly rated statements with which it is grouped we conclude that Californians equate a better place to live with:

- Access to the serenity and awe of nature

- Outdoor spaces for play and exercise for children and adults alike
- Facilities for group sports
- Lowered levels of juvenile crime through (a place that offers) positive alternative activities

That is, in the context of a discussion with residents about parks and recreation spaces, facilities and services, the phrase “a better place to live” likely will evoke these images. To summarize, parks & recreation messaging targeted to the general public will be more relevant and responsive to expectations if it speaks to supporting the self-directed efforts of individual residents toward a better personal future in a better place to live.



California Park & Recreation Society

To access the full report, visit www.cprs.org/pdf/Market_Research_Full_Report.pdf