

EFFECTS OF MANAGEMENT TYPE ON PRICE, EXPERIENCE AND SATISFACTION WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF MANAGEMENT TYPE ON THE PRICES OF TENNIS AND SWIMMING FACILITIES IN THE NETHERLANDS AND THE EXPERIENCE AND SATISFACTION OF THE USERS OF THESE FACILITIES?

Sven Bakker
Mulier Institute, Utrecht (NL)
s.bakker@mulierinstituut.nl

Aim

Local authorities in The Netherlands face the challenge of maintaining public sport facilities during the economic crisis. Necessary cuts in the yearly budget make the local authorities think twice about subsidizing sport facilities, and tend towards a solution that privatizes (part of) the facility. Privatization of these facilities leads towards a more commercial approach of management, whereas other facilities remain managed and operated by local government. This research investigates what the effects are of management by local government or private/commercial parties on price and the experience and satisfaction of the users of sport facilities in The Netherlands.

Theoretical background

Past research into the operation of sports facilities is mainly found in the United Kingdom, in particular due to the presence of the leisure facilities database of Sport England's National Benchmarking Service. Most studies focus on organisational issues like performance, efficiency, customer satisfaction and service quality, with limited attention being paid to differences in type of management (Liu, 2009; Liu & Hsu 2010; Ramchandi & Taylor, 2011).

In their study on the performance of sports and swimming centres, Robinson & Taylor (2003) showed that type, location and size of these centres represent major influences on performance. Liu, Taylor & Shibli (2007) made a first approach of including differentiation in management types in their research by distinguishing the use of non in-house facilities and in-house facilities at sports halls and swimming pools. They concluded that non in-house facilities outperform in-house facilities in terms of operational efficiency.

At the 20th EASM conference 2012 in Aalborg, Denmark, Bakker (2012) presented that tennis and swimming facilities in The Netherlands were almost equally divided in terms of being managed privately/commercially and by the local government.

Methodology

Data on management and operation of all 1650 tennis facilities were retrieved from the Dutch national tennis federation (KNLTB); from 1300 of these facilities yearly membership-fees were collected by desk research; experience and satisfaction data of the users were retrieved by a national survey amongst 1527 members of the KNLTB, representative for the population of approximately 650 000 members. Data of 90 swimming facilities in small municipalities (<30.000 inhabitants) and 90 in large municipalities (>40.000 inhabitants), including management type and entrance fee, were retrieved from the dataset of the 'Swimming centres monitor' by the Council of Dutch local governments (VSG). Data of the experience and satisfaction of the users were collected by handing out 600 questionnaires at swimming facilities spread out over The Netherlands. The questionnaire included general satisfaction, quality of the facility, cleanliness, staff and experience. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the importance of and satisfaction about the items of these subjects.

The effects of type of management on price and satisfaction/experience of the users of both tennis and swimming facilities were analysed through linear regression analyses and included, along with the main variable of management type, the following control variables: degree of urbanity, the population of the postal code area and the land price per square meter of the municipality. The analyses of tennis facilities also included the amount of courts. In the analyses on swimming facilities the number of water-basins was added, as well as the opening hours and the presence of solitary facilities and covered facilities. The dependent performance variables representing price were yearly membership-fee (tennis) and entrance fee (swimming), and on user level experience and satisfaction.

Results

Private ownership of the tennis facility, private daily maintenance of the tennis courts and both private ownership and management of the canteen lead to a significantly higher yearly membership-fee. On the contrary, ownership of the local government of the tennis facility and the canteen as well as major and daily governmental maintenance of the tennis courts by the local government lead to a significantly lower yearly membership-fee. Users of tennis facilities with higher yearly fees are not significantly more satisfied than users at facilities with lower membership-fees.

Private/commercial management of swimming pools leads to significantly higher prices than management of the local government. Noticeable effects appear more in larger municipalities rather than in the smaller ones. On user level, the visitors of private/commercial swimming pools are, despite of the higher entrance fees, not significantly more satisfied compared to swimming pools managed by the local government.

Discussion

The discussion will confront the outcomes of this research with the outcomes found in the literature. Furthermore possible explanations for the differences found in tennis and swimming will be presented.

References

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